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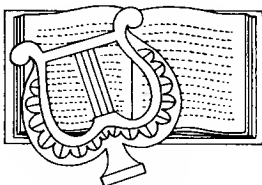
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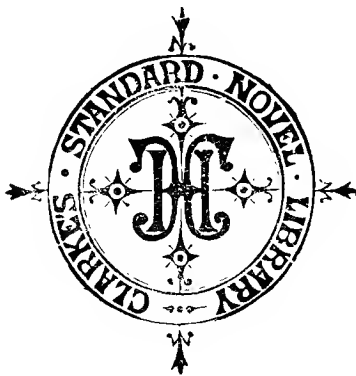
LOVE AND ADVENTURE.

BY

W. STEPHENS HAYWARD,

AUTHOR OF

THE BLACK ANGEL," "STAR OF THE SOUTH," "FIERY CROSS,"
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TALES

OF

LIFE, LOVE, AND ADVENTURE.

I.

THE TWO BROTHERS;

OR, THE FATAL PASSION.

“FAR from the busy hum of men,” two little villages were dotted down, one in the county of Berkshire, the other, separated only by the river Thames, in Oxfordshire.

The Berkshire village is called Long Hampton, the other Little Hampton.

Between these two villages from time immemorial has existed a rivalry. The Long Hampton and Little Hampton cricket-matches have always been with the neighbourhood subjects of intense interest; but for several years Long Hampton has been triumphant, and that mainly owing to the skill and spirit of two brothers, Jack and George Hazel. They were the life and soul of all that was going on in Long Hampton. In summer the Long Hampton Cricket Club flourished, and victoriously the chosen eleven of the Berkshire village carried all before it. In winter none were readier than Jack and George Hazel, either in earth-stopping to provide sport for the hounds, or (especially at Christmas time), by

gifts of coals, meat, or money, to lighten the burden of poverty and old age.

Many a weary old man—wearied from a life of toil and an old age of poverty—had cause to bless the warm-hearted charity of the brothers.

“God bless ‘em! they’re just like their dad.” No greater praise could be bestowed, at least, so thought the simple-minded inhabitants of Long Hampton, for the father of Jack and George Hazel had lived a simple and frugal man, whereas, had he so have chosen, he might have been a proud and opulent one. But John Hazel the elder chose rather to live poor and die poor, leaving to his sons, in place of amassed wealth, only the freehold farm of two hundred acres and the “God speed you!” of everybody. Nor did the brothers after their father’s death disappoint the hopes of their neighbours, who, lamenting the old man, yearned to see his sons walk in his steps.

They were “chips of the old block,” generous, honest, brave—so said all Long Hampton. Jack and George were twenty-four and twenty when they followed their father to the grave in the quiet old corner of the churchyard, where, for more than two hundred years, the Hazels had lain their bones.

Brought up together as children, having lost their mother before memory began, they had played, fished, bird-nested, cricketed together in the sunny summer-time, and in winter their games and sports, whether snowballing, skating, sliding, sparrow-netting, or what not, were always shared in common.

Then, when the two boys were sent to school, it was grand to see how they stuck together—how the elder, Jack, thrashed or tried to thrash all the big boys who lashed his younger brother, and how the younger brother took many a licking rather than get Jack in a fight in which he was sure to be worsted.

And so all went on smoothly until—at the date when our story begins—Jack was twenty-six and George was twenty-two. Their father had been dead two years, and the brothers farmed the two hundred acres, and were as happy as the day is long.

The farm was situated, as we have said, on the banks of the Isis, which divided alike the counties of Berkshire and Oxford and the villages of Long and Little Hampton. The grounds of the house of Moreton Marsh Farm ran down to the river, where a boat-house and punt gave ready access to the other shore and county. Now, the land on the other side belonged to one Owen

Meredith, an old man, with one daughter. He was, so people said, a rich man, but, had he not a stiver in the world, he would have still been rich with such a girl as Myra Meredith to call him father. Myra, at this time, was seventeen—handsome, loving, gentle, and good. There was but a stream dividing the two farms, and seeing each other every day, it would have been strange indeed had not one of the brothers fallen in love with the gentle Myra.

Jack and George were in temperament different as light from darkness. Jack—quiet, reserved, almost shy; George—dashing, impetuous, the life and soul of everything, quite a rustic Prince Rupert. With the great majority the light-hearted George was the favourite, but the great majority did not at the time appreciate the quiet, earnest nature of John. They were so accustomed to his kind, quiet manner, and took it as much a matter of course as they would the light of the sun. George, on the other hand, was never the same; all life, spirits, and energy, he seemed like a comet or shooting-star, and perpetually claimed their attention. John, as the elder, exercised a great influence over George. He stood in place of father and mother to him, and no spoiled child was ever so watched over as George Hazel by the quiet, reserved Jack.

Both were tall and handsome, but George, the younger, was fair, and had blue eyes, and a woman's dancing smile; while Jack was darker, graver, and altogether more staid and quiet. Jack, the elder, had always given way to his younger brother both in trifles and in more important matters. George, on his part, could not but be deeply sensible of his elder brother's unvarying kindness, which had flowed on in a steady stream from the far-back days of childhood. He loved, and what is more, respected his calm, grave brother, who laughed at his fun, smiled at his follies, and scarcely reproved his faults.

Surely, one would think that even the enemy of mankind would fail in making enemies of these two.

And yet it was to be. John and George Hazel are destined to part as deadly enemies—aye, worse! for an old enemy may become a firm friend, but an old friend once estranged is usually an enemy to the last.

Myra Meredith had an only brother, Philip, who in every respect was what a son and brother should be.

Philip Meredith and John Hazel were fast friends; Phil, indeed,

was Jack's only intimate friend, for his reserved nature did not invite familiar friendship, though his character and sterling qualities commanded universal respect.

Philip was passionately fond of his beautiful sister Myra; and although perhaps he would rather have seen her give the preference to John Hazel, yet, next to his friend, that friend's brother was the man he would have chosen for his sister's future husband.

The summer passed quietly on—sunny June, sultry July and August, came and went, and the yellow tinge in the corn told of the near approach of harvest. Nearly every evening, when the labours and joys of the day were over, the two brothers would go down to the boat-house, ferry themselves across, and stroll up to Lady Grove, as the farm of Owen Meredith was named. The old man was antiquated in his habits, and adhered both to the dress and habits of a past generation. His knee-breeches and drab gaiters, replaced when he went out in the fields by John Bull top-boots, were but the outer signs of the old man's inner life. Living in the days of steam and telegraphs, he could not forget the olden times of mail-coaches and couriers.

Owen Meredith loved the old hall of the farmhouse, with its enormous fireplace and ancient chimney-corners; nor could anything induce him to sit in the parlour, a room on the decoration of which Myra had exhausted her various tastes and ingenuity.

The old farmer's great delight was a game of cribbage, and in this John Hazel never failed him; as regular as the sun went down (except on a special occasion, such as a cricketing supper), John Hazel would obtain the cards and board from Myra, and carrying a small table to the chimney-corner, would play the best out of five games with Owen Meredith. They played for half-a-crown a game, and though during the last three years some thousands of games had been lost and won, yet there was not between the two a difference of twenty half-crowns, so, on the whole, it was a very harmless amusement.

While John and the old man fought over their game, Myra and George usually held a quiet *tête-à-tête* by the window, and Philip, who was musically inclined, would take down his flute, and seating himself in the porch outside, would pipe away to the great amusement of the swallows under the eaves. At ten o'clock supper would be placed on the table, and shortly after Jack and George would say good-night, Philip and Myra sometimes walking with them down to the river which divided Long from Little Hampton.

And in this quiet manner, varied only by an occasional cricket-match, regatta, or country festivity called "feast," the summer slipped on, and autumn, with its rich harvest of fruit and grain, arrived.

But while yet the corn-sheaves were not all stacked, and ere the flight of the swallow and fall of the yellow leaf, there was an arrival in the neighbourhood.

The great house at Long Hampton had been long untenanted. Squire Vernon had resided abroad with his only daughter, Viviana, for nearly twenty years. A straitened income and heavy encumbrances on the estate necessitated this course; but now, after some eighteen years of exile, the squire had so far righted himself as once again to be able to take up his abode in the home of his ancestors—Long Hampton Hall.

He was warmly welcomed to the old place, for there were many yet alive who could remember the family before adversity and misfortune had driven them away; but though, after his long exile, Squire Vernon was now able to resume his ancestral seat, he was still a poor man, and in place of the grand carriages and profuse hospitality of his predecessors, a saddle-horse for himself and daughter, a pony-chaise and dog-cart, with some five servants only, were all the establishment at Long Hampton.

It chanced, some weeks after their arrival, that John, who was a great fisherman (the solitude and quiet of that pursuit according well with his nature), was trolling in the punt for pike, which abounded in the stream. Hearing a splashing in the river above him, he looked around with some annoyance to see what it was which thus threatened his hopes of sport, and saw a small skiff floating down the stream, in which was seated a young lady. As the skiff came nearer he noticed that the young lady was very handsome, and also that she had lost one of the sculls, which she was vainly endeavouring to regain by means of the remaining one.

"Sir, will you kindly oblige me by getting the oar I have lost? I am afraid I have disturbed your sport, but indeed it was quite unintentional."

She spoke in the sweetest of voices, and with a slight foreign accent, which was perfectly charming.

John Hazel gladly complied, and when he found that the young lady was quite ignorant of boating, he offered to row her boat to where she wished. Not without some hesitation was this offer

accepted, and first fastening up the punt in the boat-house, he took the sculls, and in a very few minutes rowed the young lady to the landing-stage on the grounds of Long Hampton Hall, which, like Moreton Marsh Farm, ran down to the river. The young lady thanked him with a bright smile, and ran off towards the house. John at once judged rightly that this could be no other than the daughter of Squire Vernon. As he walked slowly back, he could not help reflecting on her great beauty and charming piquant manner.

Now, John Hazel was, or affected to be, indifferent to women and often said that he would live and die a bachelor. George would marry, and *one* woman in the old farmhouse would be quite enough. Philip Meredith, too, backed up his friend in his resolve, and declared his intention to do likewise. John Hazel was always a great fisherman, but even Philip could no quite account for the enthusiasm with which he followed the sport this autumn—an enthusiasm which, strange to say, met with but poor reward, for he returned day after day, sometimes with an empty basket, never with a filled one.

“George, just go round the fields to-day, and send that wheat to market. I think I shall go up the stream and kill a fish or two.”

Such-like speeches were now frequent with the elder brother, and the younger always laughingly agreed, though he could not quite make out the extreme ardour with which John pursued the angling art.

As the reader may have guessed, however, Viviana Vernon had more to do with these afternoon fishings than either pike or perch. Strangely enough, John Hazel was continually meeting the young lady, who, on her part, was continually getting into some little difficulty, from which he was in politeness bound to extricate her. Then, when they became a little better acquainted, she actually begged him to teach her to row. How could he refuse?

And so the autumn passed, and winter came, putting a end to John Hazel's fishing, and Viviana's boating lessons. But though winter could do this, all the ice, storms, snows, and frosts could not quench the fire which had begun to burn in the honest heart of John Hazel; nor could it prevent the young lady from taking solitary rambles, in the course of which she sometimes (accidentally) met the young farmer.

Quiet and reserved outwardly, there was a world of power in John Hazel which carried all before it; and long before the bloss-

soms of spring, Viviana Vernon, notwithstanding that her father was as poor as proud, had vowed her love for him, and had pledged herself to obtain her father's consent.

Nor did she fail in her promise. Petted and spoiled all her life, she boldly went to proud Squire Vernon, and told him plainly that she loved John Hazel, and asked his consent to their marriage.

The old squire was aghast, breathless with dismay; but he loved his daughter, and what is more, he knew her wild, impetuous nature, and, fond father as he was, pocketed his pride, and made her happy by giving his consent, after due inquiry as to the character and circumstances of John Hazel.

Great was the astonishment in Long Hampton when it was noised about that quiet John Hazel had won the Squire's beautiful daughter, and would wed her in the autumn. Prodigious was the joy among the neighbours, and many declared, after mature thought, that of the two Squire Vernon received the greatest honour, so great were John's sterling qualities and earnestness of disposition appreciated.

As for the successful lover, he took the jokes and chaff of his brother and Philip all in good part, smilingly, and without replying; and it was finally arranged that George should marry Myra Meredith at the same time that John married Viviana Vernon. He steadily refused the squire's offer to take up his abode at the Hall after his marriage, and declared respectfully and firmly that his own home, humble as it was, was the place for his wife, and in this Viviana willingly agreed.

Hitherto George Hazel had seen little or nothing of Miss Vernon; but when the engagement was made public, and sanctioned by the squire, she was a constant visitor at Moreton Marsh.

George Hazel was at once struck with her beauty—her fatal beauty—and almost before he knew what he was doing, he was head over ears in love with his brother's betrothed. Spoiled and petted all his life, his every wish and whim gratified by that brother, George did not strive against this criminal passion, but gave way to the madness with all the vehemence of his impetuous nature.

John Hazel dreamed not of mischief, or he would have removed his future wife from the chance of the danger; but his mild nature was incapable of suspicion, and to suspect his own brother of such baseness was to him impossible. The spring passed, and the summer came. John Hazel saw with pleasure that Viviana

favourably impressed his brother, and was gratified for the attention he bestowed on her, never dreaming of danger.

Viviana was at first amused by the high spirits and dashing manner of the younger brother, and did not fear for her heart's allegiance. But the very vehemence of George's nature, his handsome face, sparkling blue eyes, his high spirits, and her own fickleness, at last prevailed over her sense of honour and truth, and even the real love she bore John. She persuaded herself at first it was but a flirtation, and laughingly listened to the impassioned speeches of the younger brother.

But in time a species of infatuation possessed her. She did not really love George; but if she could have analyzed her own heart, she would have known that his brilliant power, high spirits, and impetuosity had dazzled her imagination. John Hazel could have saved her at any time, but he dreamed not of danger, and never thought to receive so fatal a stab from a brother's hand.

* * * * *

It is July, and the marriages are to take place in September; latterly George has not been so attentive to his promised wife, the gentle Myra, as formerly, but, in the absence of all suspicion, little is thought of it, either by the sweet girl herself, or even her brother. George volunteered to take Viviana for a run up the river, as John was out in the field, then she could return to tea at the Marsh. While they were gone John Hazel returned, and finding no one at home, took his fishing-rod, intending to amuse himself by an hour's roach-fishing.

A favourite place was beside the boat-house, and here he took his seat, resolved to await their return. He had not been there more than half an hour, when the splash of oars told him they were coming. Without any definite reason he remained quiet, while his brother rowed in the boat here, and made the skiff fast. Then, instead of coming out, George Hazel took his seat by the side of Viviana. John could hear every word that passed.

It was a sultry summer day, and one which might tempt even an anchorite to love. A gentle breeze rippled the water, and not a sound broke the stillness, save the cawing of the rooks and the song of the blackbird.

John listened to the conversation of the pair, at first with amusement, then with astonishment, and then his cheek grew deadly pale.

Could he be mistaken? Was his own brother whispering words

of love to his betrothed? Soon all doubt was removed, and a deadly chill fell on his heart.

"Viviana," he heard George mutter, "what a cruel girl you are! You know I love you."

"Hush, George, pray!"

"But I will not hush. I do love you; not with the cold regard of Jack, but with deep passionate love. Listen to me."

"For Heaven's sake, George, do not talk so!—remember your brother."

"My brother! Oh, I do not fear that Jack may be a little hot and nettled, but he will give you up without much grief."

"If I thought so——" she interrupted, angrily.

"Tell me, Viviana—suppose Jack would consent to give you up, could you love me?"

For a moment her good angel whispered confidence in her lover.

"John Hazel would never give me up but with his life."

"Yes, yes, he will; I know—I am sure of it!" answered George.

"Can you—will you love me?"

John, pale as death, with teeth clenched, knew that at this time George placed his arm around her.

"Oh, George, leave me! For Heaven's sake, leave me! I like you, but I cannot, will not, say what you wish."

"Viviana!" cried George, impetuously, and straining her to his breast in spite of her struggles, "answer me: if Jack will give you up, will you be mine?"

"But he will not. Pray let me go."

"He will—he will! Say that you consent, if it prove as I say—that you love me a little."

"If such a thing were to happen—but it never can."

"And you love me a little?"

"Yes, yes—a little. Let me free."

Then John Hazel heard the sound of a kiss, and unable longer to sit still, he bounded to his feet, threw the fishing-rod into the river, and moved away. At the same moment, alarmed by the noise, George and Viviana rose, and stepped out of the boat on to the shore. The next instant they stood face to face with John Hazel, pale as death, and with a strange glare in his eyes. Viviana screamed slightly, and George turned crimson with shame. John silently regarded his brother and Viviana for some little time, and then spoke in a dull, husky voice—

"Miss Vernon, you are free. I willingly relinquish you to—

to——” “My brother” he was going to say, but stopped, and said, “I relinquish you to Mr. George Hazel. Good evening, and good-bye for ever.”

“John! John! for Heaven’s sake, John, listen to me! I did not mean it, indeed—indeed.” But he paid no heed, and was going on, when George spoke—“John! John! brother——”

At the word brother he turned fiercely round.

“George Hazel, you have no longer a *brother*!”

That was all; the next instant he had gone.

Viviana, with bitter grief, hurried off home, but hoped the anger of her injured lover would moderate. George walked moodily towards the old house, with bowed-down head and slow step, and felt a very villain. When he arrived, the dog-cart was at the door, and in it was John’s portmanteau. Philip Meredith was there too; and just as George was about entering the house, John came down the stairs from his bedroom into the hall; he took one last, lingering look around the old familiar place. There stood the chair in which his dear old father used to sit; there above the mantelpiece hung his dead mother’s picture; every nook, every corner of the old place reminded him of the days which were no more; and now he was about to bid them an eternal farewell, and go forth a wanderer on the face of the earth. He brushed a tear from his eyes, and hurried out.

George stood between him and the dog-cart.

“John! brother! where are you going?” he said.

“George Hazel, you have no brother. Please stand on ~~one~~ side.”

That was all!

Just as John was about to mount the box seat, the baying of his favourite hound fell upon his ear.

“Philip, go loose the old dog; he shall come with me. Brute though he be, he never played me false.”

The old dog came bounding out, rejoiced at his liberty. Philip and John mounted the dog-cart, and the next minute George Hazel was alone. The sound of the wheels on the hard road, as the trap rattled away, came like a death-knell on the heart of George Hazel, and the joyful barking of the dog as he ran by the side of the dog-cart seemed like a funeral dirge; then the sound of the rattling wheels and the deep voice of the hound faded away in the distance, and all was silent.

John Hazel had met Philip on his return, and in a few words

told him the bitter tale—the history of his brother's double treachery to himself and the gentle Myra.

"What shall you do, Jack?" asked his friend.

"Do! I shall go abroad—to Australia, I think—forget I ever had a brother, or knew what love was; and when God pleases to take me, lay my bones in a foreign land, alone, unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

With tears in his eyes, Philip answered—"No, not alone, Jack—not alone. I will go with you—I, your friend, will not leave you in the hour of your bitter trouble, even though your own brother has played the traitor's part."

"God bless you, Philip! As you please."

In a few days the younger brother received a letter; it ran thus:—

"GEORGE HAZEL,—I have instructed Mr. Wills, the attorney at Knutsford, to sell one-half of the farm, and given him the necessary power of attorney and directions how to forward the money. I forbear to sell the house and homestead, although by our father's will they belong to me. I wish you no ill; I forgive you, so far as man's erring nature will allow me to forgive. When you receive this, I shall be on a voyage to Australia. Philip Meredith, whose sister you have also so deeply injured, accompanies me. You will never see me again. For the sake of our father and mother, and for the memories of 'Auld Lang Syne,' I say, 'God speed you!'"

"JOHN HAZEL."

The letter was spotted with tears let fall in the writing thereof; spotted again with tears in the reading—tears of remorse, shame, and agony—tears of grief and affection for the wronged and noble-hearted writer.

* * * * *

A month later, Viviana was stretched on a bed of death. She sent for George Hazel, and he came.

"George," murmured the dying girl, "I have sent for you; I never loved you—I never loved any but your brother John. With my whole heart and soul I loved him; I have ever loved him. Now, on my death-bed, and about to enter the presence of God, I repeat, *I love him!* I charge you to repeat my words to him when you see him."

"I shall never see him again," said George, in a choking voice.

"God forgive me, Viviana! I have killed you, and broken my brother's heart. God forgive me, for I can never forgive myself."

An hour later the shutters of Long Hampton Hall went up, and the great escutcheon of the ancient family of the Vernons was hung out in front. A broken-hearted old man knelt by the side of a bed, on which lay the body of a fair young girl. A young man, with bowed-down head and tottering steps, slunk catiff-like away from the mansion. The old man was Squire Vernon, the young man George Hazel.

Time passed on; winter came, then spring, then summer, then winter again, and so on for four long, dreary years; but no news from John Hazel. Four years rolled on, and during that time not a single line had come to any living soul in England, to say whether he were alive or dead. Philip Meredith wrote twice a-year to his sister and father, but not one word did he say of John Hazel. His letters were to be addressed to the post-office, Melbourne, and George Hazel sat down to write a long letter to John, and addressed it as he had heard indirectly (for he never crossed the threshold of Lady Grove Farm now), that Philip's letters were addressed—"John Hazel, Post-office, Melbourne, in care of Philip Meredith." Ten months later it came back through the Dead-letter office.

George seldom saw Myra, for she studiously avoided him, as of course her brother had told her all. Once they met face to face in a narrow lane. George looked appealingly, yearning, if not for love, at least for forgiveness and human sympathy; but Myra drew the skirts of her dress closer around her, as though to avoid even touching him, and passed on in silence.

George felt as though the curse of Cain were on him, and in his utter misery, prayed for death. It was in vain he sought forgetfulness in noisy company or gaiety; a deep gloom settled over him, and people wondered at the change. Formerly all life and spirits; now morose, silent, restless, and unhappy. It is true he entered into everything that was going on in Long Hampton, for he had a certain pride which urged him to bear his cross uncomplainingly, but he was no more the George Hazel of olden times.

Although the exact circumstances were never given to the world, it was well known that there had been a bitter quarrel between the two brothers, and that John had gone abroad, never to return. Greatly was his honest face and kindly smile missed in Long Hampton, and now that he was gone from among them, he was

deeply regretted, and all gave tribute to his good qualities. Enemies he had none; and even after the lapse of four years, there were many who hoped and prophesied he would return.

Owen Meredith was now fast breaking up, and a stroke of paralysis almost deprived him of sight, and warned his daughter that the end was not far off. His brain was for a time slightly affected, and in his wanderings he would call for John Hazel to play cribbage with him.

Myra wrote to her brother, saying, that if he wished to see his father alive, he must come back at once.

George Hazel heard of his illness, and sent a respectful note to Myra, asking if he might be allowed to see the old man. The note was returned, and on the back page was written—"Miss Meredith's compliments to Mr. George Hazel, and she begs to inform him his presence is not wished at Lady Grove."

Poor George with a deep sigh tore up the letter, but retained the hasty scrawl on the fly-leaf. For four years Myra had never acknowledged his existence, either by word or writing, and even those brief, cool words in her dear and well-remembered hand were something. They recalled the memories of the happy past, and looking back through the vista of years, George remembered his early love—a fond girl of seventeen, whose every thought was of him, and him alone. His own wicked folly had destroyed all that, and had wrought much more evil. It was right he should bear the penalty.

Still old Meredith lingered on, till five years had passed since his son and John Hazel bade him adieu.

"Is Philip coming, Myra? I want to see him before I die."

But Myra could only weep. A year ago she had written to her brother, and yet he came not.

* * * * *

It is a glorious summer evening, and a great merry-making is going on at the White Hart, the only inn in Long Hampton. There has been a cricket-match, and though Long Hampton has been defeated, that does not detract from the mirth and jollity of the evening. A plentiful supper has been served in the long room up-stairs; and now, the table having been cleared, songs, toasts, and gallons of honest Tom Ruskin's good ale are the order of the day. The worthy landlady bustles about, hardly able to fill the measures fast enough, as the demand increases with the fun and noise.

"Hallo, Tom Ruskin! and how are you by this time?"

The landlord is about filling a gallon jug ordered from the tap, but stops, puts the jug down and looks over the bar, as he hears the voice. A tall, swarthy man, with a great beard, he sees, accompanied by another not so tall, but also swarthy and with a beard.

"An' who the devil be you, that calls me Tom Ruskin in my own house? I don't know ye—neither of ye. Thee bea'n't no Long Hampton men, nor yet the county round, I'll swear."

"Look again, Tom Ruskin."

"Darn my old skin! but I know that voice," said Tom, bustling round the bar, and out into the sanded passage. "Let's have a look at ye in the light." For a moment or two the old host gazed in puzzled wonder; then a smile slowly broke out on the bearded face of the stranger. "Darn my old skin, if it ain't Master John Hazel!" he shouted frantically; and running forward, grasped the hand of the bearded man.

"You'll excuse me, Master John, won't 'ee now? but I dandled you on my knee many a time, and it does my old heart good to see your honest face again. And Master Meredith, too. God bless my heart alive! this is a happy day for Long Hampton. Come in the bar, my boys—come in the bar, and have a stoup with old Tom Ruskin for 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

Tears were in the old fellow's eyes, and it was with difficulty he could draw three glasses of his best old ale, his hand trembled so with excitement.

"God bless my heart alive!—Master John and Master Meredith, I never thought to set eyes on you again!"

A burst of merriment up-stairs here recalled the landlord's attention to his guests.

"Come up-stairs, lads—come up-stairs; there's all Long Hampton and Little Hampton there too, and they'll be main glad to see ye."

And pushing Philip—leading John—Tom Ruskin blundered up the dark stairs into the convivial room.

Some one was singing an old English hunting-song, the chorus of which is—

"For all my fancy dwells on Nancy,
And I'll sing Tally-ho!"

And a rattling chorus it was, roared out by some score or so of sturdy yeomen. At the conclusion of the song, after the applause

that greeted the singer had subsided, there was a bit of a lull, and all gazed curiously towards the door where stood the two new arrivals and the landlord.

"They don't know ye—they don't know ye," chuckled honest Tom, pleased that others were as blind as himself. "Wait till I tell them, see how they will find a seat."

"My lads," he said, addressing the company round the table, "I've brought two old friends—friends whom you haven't seen for many a year. I told 'em you'd be glad to see and give 'em a welcome."

All attention was now turned on Philip and John Hazel, but time, Australian suns, and their beards, effectually disguised them.

"Don't you know 'em?" he continued, with glee. "Wait till I tell you who they are—John Hazel and Philip Meredith."

A shout of delight broke from all, for there was not a man present who had not known and liked John Hazel; nor was Philip without many friends. They were surrounded on all sides, and many a hearty squeeze of the hand welcomed the wanderers back to the old place.

But there was one who kept his seat, and did not offer to move. That one was George Hazel. At the mention of his brother's name he turned red and pale alternately; and when the old familiar voice—a voice which came on his heart laden with the memories of old times, childhood and boyhood—he felt faint and sick with emotion.

When all had done hand-shaking and greeting them, John and Philip were conducted to the vacant chairs, whose former occupants had been compelled to leave early. But those two seats were not close adjacent, however, for there was another between them, and that other was occupied by George Hazel.

The brothers, who had not seen one another for five long years, were suddenly face to face, as each looked round. George scarcely recognised the Jack of olden times in the swarthy, bearded man before him, and John was struck with pity as he noticed the careworn, thin face of George. The glance at each other was but momentary, for George looked down in shame and confusion, while Jack turned moodily away.

And now the healths of the returned wanderers are proposed and drank with musical honours, till the whole room shook again.

Then, while all were still standing, except John, Philip, and

George, who appeared bewildered, dazzled, some one struck up, "Auld Lang Syne."

Hands were clasped all around as the strain went on.

All around—no, not all around, for one remained seated; and at the first notes he bent his head forward on the table, and hid his face in his hands. George Hazel remembered old times too well to be thus reminded, without feeling the bitter contrast between the past and the present.

"Auld Lang Syne!"

As the strain rolled on, what memories swept over the soul of John Hazel. He remembered the death-bed of his father, when he, almost with his last breath, charged the brothers ever to live in love and peace. He remembered the soft, plaintive tones in which his mother prayed him, when that father should be taken, to watch over and guard her youngest born. And now both mother and father were in their graves, but the brothers worse than enemies—strangers to each other.

"Auld Lang Syne!"

In fancy John Hazel saw George a fair-haired, laughing boy—the joy and pride of all, his mother's darling, his father's hope. And was that figure, bowed down, worn, and weak, with tears forcing their way through the fingers which hid the wan face—was that indeed bright-eyed, bright-souled George Hazel?

"Auld Lang Syne!"

Memories of the happy past came teeming up before him, and then he thought he saw his dead mother's pleading face. How had he fulfilled his trust? His heart smote him, and yearned towards the sinner. He looked with moist eyes inquiringly at his friend. Philip's were not dry, and to the mute question asked gave a plain answer.

John's good angel prevailed, and drove back the demon of anger and unforgiveness. He slapped his brother on the back, and uttered the one word—"George!"

For five long years he had not heard that voice; he started to his feet, bewildered, almost frightened, and saw his brother's outstretched right hand—that honest right hand, which had ever been ready to shield him from harm. He grasped it in both his, pressed it for a moment, staggered from the room and down the stairs, with streaming eyes and beating heart. John and Philip followed him.

All present knew of the quarrel between the brothers, and of

the reconciliation. One loud, deafening cheer broke from them, and then they went on singing more vociferously than before, "Auld Lang Syne." As soon as George had somewhat recovered, John and Philip each took an arm, and the three walked slowly on towards the farmhouse, "Auld Lang Syne" still pealing forth from the windows of the White Hart, as if to give them welcome and wish them joy. They came to the old homestead, and entered the hall, where all looked exactly as five years ago.

"Jack," said George, in a husky voice, "here is the key of your bed-room; no one has ever entered it for five years."

John looked around; there, close to the chimney-piece, hung his gun exactly as he had left it. George noticed his glance.

"No one has pulled a trigger or taken it down since you have been away, John."

They went out to the stables, and there, in a loose box, John saw his favourite horse.

"No one has crossed his back since you have been away, John; he's done nothing but eat oats. I gave orders no one should ride him till you yourself came back. Thank God, that time has come, and I will have the saddle on as soon as you like."

And so it was with everything; no one thing that ever John called his own, or ever used, had been parted with, lost, or allowed to be used by anyone else.

"Come," said Philip, presently, "let us cross the stream, and walk to Lady Grove."

George hung back. His brother had forgiven him, but Myra—he could not face her.

"No; you and John go. I cannot."

"No excuse; come," said Philip, taking his arm. "We must all forget and forgive."

They then strolled across the field to the boat-house, down to and across the rippling stream, and up the path leading to Lady Grove. On their way, they came in view of Long Hampton Hall. The shutters were still up; for after his daughter's death, the old squire would never live there himself, or suffer anyone else to do so.

George watched his brother as he gazed mournfully on the house which once contained his love; but when again their eyes met, there was no reproach in the glance, nothing but sorrow and free forgiveness.

And now the three stand in the quaint old farmhouse, which

for five years had known them not. The light was on their backs, and shone full on the faces of Owen Meredith sitting in an easy chair, and Myra seated on a stool at his feet. She was reading to him, but stopped as the three entered. George came last; and she gazed for a time in silent wonder at, as she thought, the strange men.

"What, Myra, my girl! don't you know me?"

She knew the voice instantly, and so did the old man.

"Philip! Philip! you have come, then, at last!" and rising, she threw herself into her brother's arms.

"Eh?—what?—my boy come back? Where is he? Philip, lad, just give me a grip of your hand. It was mortal unkind of ye to leave your old father for all these long, weary years, but now I can die happy. I can't see you, for I'm a'most blind; but I can hear your voice, and that is angels' music to my old heart. Where are you, lad?"

"Father! father! here I am. Cheer up, father; you will get over this, and live many a long year yet."

"No, lad, no. I've been sent for, and now I've seen your face—for I can just see it, Philip—held your hand, and heard your dear voice, I am not afraid to go. I prayed I might be spared to give my boy my blessing, and I've been heard. Now I can die happy."

"Don't talk of dying, father. Here's Jack Hazel come to play a game at cribbage, as in the days of 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

"Aye, 'Auld Lang Syne,' lad. Myra, where's Philip's flute? Let him play me 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

Myra silently got the flute, and gave it to her brother.

"And, father, here's George Hazel, too; we must all be friends now."

"Wi' all my heart, lad; if you can forgive, it's not for a blind old man, nigh the end of his journey, to say nay. George Hazel, give me thy hand, man."

"And Myra," said Philip, sadly, "have you no word of forgiveness for poor George?"

"I forgive him," said Myra, calmly, "if, indeed, I have anything to forgive."

Then she turned coldly away, and stood by her father's chair.

Philip began to play, and as the soft tones of the flute thrilled on the quiet, evening air, Myra's heart began to soften. As she thought of the olden times, her eyes almost involuntarily sought George Hazel's face. How pale and wan and careworn he looked,

she thought. Then came memories of soft words of love whispered in her willing ears—of evening walks by the quiet river, when all around seemed to breathe love. She thought, too, of a little picture and a lock of hair which all through these weary five years, spite of her pride, she had worn in her bosom. They would do no harm, and many and many a time she had wept over the likeness of her false love. Tears filled her gentle eyes, and when Philip ceased, her bosom heaved, and her heart beat wildly. Her eyes met those of George Hazel; in a moment he was by her side.

“Myra, dear Myra! do forgive me!”

For five years, though she had seen him sometimes, she had never heard his voice, and now it rushed on her soul and carried all before it. It was the voice of her first, her only love; the voice that had won her girlish love, and now her woman’s heart was not proof against it.

He seized her hand in his; she did not withdraw it.

“Oh! George, how could you behave so cruelly?”

That was all she said, and then she fell into his arms and wept.

* * * * *

And now that the living are all reconciled, let us let fall the curtain.

John Hazel, doubtless, will keep his word, and live a bachelor to the end of his days. Let us hope that at the end of life’s journey he may look back through the vista of years, and find at least some pleasant memories of “Auld Lang Syne.”

II.

KATE COVENTRY:

A TALE OF SOUTHAMPTON WATER.



I was often on the verge of speaking to her, but somehow could not muster up courage enough; she was so evidently a lady, that I feared to incur a rebuff should I presume to address her without an introduction.

She was an extremely handsome girl, and most elegantly dressed. Somehow, whenever we met I felt convinced there was a glance of encouragement in her eyes, which again and again all but emboldened me to take the decisive step.

Tall, finely formed, with brown hair and flashing dark eyes, she was a girl who would attract attention anywhere. It was in the grand avenue at the top of the town of Southampton where I met her every day, and in that quiet seaport town a coquettish little straw hat, with a partridge wing for ornament, was not out of place or in bad taste. Her tall, fine figure was enveloped in a Paisley shawl, her dress was always of black or brown silk, with a black or blue scarf worn around the waist, dark, well-fitting gloves, faultless boots, and her whole demeanour, walk, and appearance bespoke her a gentlewoman. Once I saw her with an old lady, who appeared to be an invalid, as she was wheeled up and down the avenue in a Bath chair. At all other times this fair young lady, the object of my regard, was alone. Sometimes I met her in the town; always when I met her she would bend on me a curious look, as though she knew me or had seen me before, although I had forgotten. I tried to persuade myself that it was so, but after tasking my memory to the utmost, was forced to own it impossible.

At the time of which I speak I was getting up Hindostanee and Persian, for through the interest of my family a very good appointment in North-western India was awaiting me, an appointment which might lead in time to my being the governor of a province. I had been to India; at the age of sixteen I was sent out, and remained in Calcutta for five-and-a-half years, when it was thought advisable for many reasons that I should return to England, complete my studies, and await the appointment in question. At the time of which I speak I was between twenty-two and twenty-three years of age, high-spirited, with bright prospects before me, tolerably good-looking, and of a gay, light, good-tempered disposition, fond of pleasure, and a devoted admirer of female beauty.

I had no particular business in Southampton, nor had I any friends in the neighbourhood. On landing there from the P. & O. C.'s steam-boat, on my return from India, I took up my quarters for a few days at one of the hotels. I was charmed with the town, which was gay and lively without being crowded; I took an immense fancy to the broad and handsome High Street, and the ancient Bar or Bar-gate, while I thought the avenue at the end of the town one of the prettiest walks I had ever seen. Then, too, Southampton Water found me endless amusement; I hired a little boat, and with my crew of one small boy sailed imaginary matches about the harbour, sometimes anchoring and fishing for flat fish with hook and line. Occasionally too, on a fine day, I would boldly put out to sea, and stand over to the Isle of Wight, which with a fair breeze I used to make in less than three hours.

I think I had been in this fine old town about two months when I first saw the young lady in question. From the very first I was attracted by her, and, strange to say, she bent on me a curious glance, half-stopped, and I really think was going to speak to me; however, she did not, but passed on, as I thought with a slightly heightened colour. We met again and again, now under the shadow of the old elm-trees, as I smoked my afternoon cigar in the avenue; now in the town, as she fluttered about from shop to shop like a bright butterfly; now on the platform, awaiting the arrival of a mail-boat or man-of-war; sometimes on the esplanade, and once or twice in the Antelope grounds, on the occasion of a cricket-match. The young lady seemed to go about everywhere, and always alone. I never saw her speak to a gentleman, nor did I ever hear any among my casual acquaintances who

could boast of having accosted her successfully; several had ventured on a trial, but had been met with a haughty rebuff.

Be that as it might, I at last determined to risk it. I felt quite sure that the singular glance she always bent on me as she passed me was meant as an encouragement. On one occasion I am quite certain that a slight smile stole over her face, but she instantly turned away to conceal it. However, I had made up my mind to accost the young lady, and waited only for a good opportunity.

I was very nervous about it. I know nothing more humiliating or painful—nothing which makes a fellow feel so small—as to be met with a haughty stare, and to be shunned with a quickened pace and a gathering of the skirts, in the perpetration of such a thing as I meditated. However, there was no help for it; it must be done. I said to myself I would do it, and I certainly should keep my word.

One day I found myself walking behind her up the High Street; she passed through the Bar, up the town, past the park and barracks, and entered the well-known avenue. I knew she was aware that I was following her, for several times as she stopped to look in a shop, I caught a quick, stealthy glance thrown back in my direction, and she did not quicken her pace; this I thought favourable to my hopes. Presently, seeing the coast quite clear, I hastened to overtake her. I was within half-a-dozen yards of her, and was framing a pretty apologetic speech, when, to my utter astonishment, I may almost say dismay, she turned sharply round and faced me—a flush on her fair cheek, a smile on her lips, her beautiful eyes sparkling with mischief.

“You are a friend of Bob Randals, are you not?” she said. “I am certain I knew you, from the first.”

The sudden question, and the manner in which it was put, took my breath away.

“Bob Rand—Randals!” I stammered. “Oh!—ah!—yes—of course—Bob Randals.”

“Ah!” she said, “I thought I could not be mistaken. I expect him home in about a month from this. I dare say ere this he has left Calcutta.”

Calcutta—that name restored me my self-possession. Could it be possible that the young lady really knew me? Perhaps she had been in Calcutta herself. I was quite certain, however, that I had never heard the name, Bob Randals.

Who the deuce was he?

I resolved to venture a question.

"Do you like Calcutta?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; very much indeed—at least, I should were it not for the dreadful mosquitoes. I didn't mind the heat, but those horrid little gnats tormented me to death, and I am so stupid and clumsy, that I could never manage my mosquito-curtain properly; I always contrived to let two or three of the little wretches in, and then good-bye to all hope of sleep, or even rest. I declare, sometimes my face and hands were perfectly frightful. Bob Randals promised to give me a receipt which would infallibly prevent their biting. He kept his word, too, the impudent fellow. What do you think was the preventive measure he recommended?"

"Really can't say."

"Why, to use a native remedy: cover my face and hands with cocoa-nut oil—the nasty fellow."

She laughed at the recollection; I joined her, and we were at once at our ease—at least, I was for a time. But there always came up the awkward point of Bob Randals; she was always talking about him, and I was obliged to act a continual lie to keep up the sham. She seemed to take for granted that I was an intimate friend of this gentleman, and I could not muster up courage enough to undeceive her. She talked some time about Calcutta, her experiences there, of parties and routs, of excursions up the Hooghly, and many other things, but always contrived to get back to Bob Randals.

She did the greater part of the talking for some time, I merely putting in a word now and again, glad of the opportunity her volubility afforded me of collecting my ideas. Could I possibly have known this Mr. Randals? I asked myself; and could she have seen me with him without my knowledge? But I soon gathered from her conversation, and by cleverly putting in a question now and again, that it was quite impossible I could have become acquainted with her friend.

"How long were you in Calcutta?" I asked, determined to know the rights of the affair.

"Let me see," she said, musingly, "I went out to my aunt—then the wife, now the widow of Colonel Farquarson—in 185—; I only remained twelve months, for my poor uncle died of jungle fever, and my aunt, immediately after his death, returned to England. I dare say you know that I am an orphan, and have been

brought up and educated by Mrs. Farquarson; I suppose Bob Randals told you as much as that."

"No," I replied; "never had any conversation on the subject."

This was quite true, as the reader knows, but not in the sense she meant.

"I wonder at that; Bob Randals is such an open-hearted fellow, and you being so intimate a friend, I should have thought he would have taken you into his confidence even on such a delicate matter."

"Then, if I understand you rightly, you only remained in India a little over twelve months, and then returned to England?"

"Exactly," she said, "leaving poor Bob Randals disconsolate. However, he will be back soon. I shall be very glad to see him, but"—here she made the prettiest little face in the world—"it's rather a bore being obliged to marry him. He's a dear old fellow, and I suppose I am very fond of him, as I know he is of me. Still, somehow, I can scarcely conceive him as a lover."

"And yet——?"

"And yet I am going to marry him," she said, interrupting. "Yes, we have been engaged for a long time—ever since we were children. I wonder you never heard of that."

This was indeed astounding news. My beautiful unknown, niece of Colonel and Mrs. Farquarson, was waiting for the arrival of this Mr. Bob Randals, in order to be married to him.

An extinguisher was put on my little romance. To tell the truth, I had almost fallen in love with this singular girl, if not quite, and then to be told calmly that she was only waiting for Bob Randals to come and marry her! I was very silent after this, and allowed her to rattle on without interruption. She bade me adieu as we approached the town. We shook hands, and she hesitated, as though she expected me to ask her when I should see her again, or at least make some pretty speech. But I was too much, what is vulgarly called, flabbergasted, to do anything of the kind; and simply raising my hat, went my way, while she went hers.

When I got home to my lodgings, I thought over all she had told me, and I put it into definite shape. Bob Randals, I gathered, went out to India four years before she did, while she was quite a child, *in fact*; they were distantly related, and had been intimate from childhood.

But it was impossible that I could have known him, as he only

arrived in Calcutta shortly after herself. The regiment in which he was a lieutenant was at Lucknow, and he had only been in Calcutta once or twice for a week or so, during my stay in that city of palaces. However, one thing was certain, the young lady was firmly persuaded that I was an intimate friend of her *fiancé*, Mr. Bob Randals. After calm reflection, I resolved that it was my duty to undeceive her, and refuse longer the honour and pleasure of her acquaintance on false pretences.

So, full of good resolutions, I went to bed, and slept on it. I did not see her at all the next day; I was moody, dissatisfied with myself, and carefully avoided the avenue.

But when I again met her, my resolution to undeceive her and my ill-temper melted away under the influence of her bright beauty, vivacity, and good-temper. She offered me her hand, greeted me as though I were a friend of years, and finally asked me to accompany her into the town shopping. I felt a curious mixture of pleasure and pain. I was pleased and proud to be on intimate terms with the beautiful stranger; but ever and anon would rise up the memory of that confounded Bob Randals. We met again and again, and I could not help thinking that she really liked my society, looked with favour on my unworthy self, and that I had not altogether to thank the supposed fact of being a friend of Bob Randals for my good-fortune.

One day we were sitting on the battery or platform, looking out on the beautiful bay, when she turned her eyes full upon me, and said—"It is now a fortnight since we made acquaintanceship, and I have never thought to ask your name."

"My name," I said readily, "is George Sydney Crawshay."

"Crawshay. Oh! it is a pretty name—a good family name, too."

"And yours, young lady?"

But she seemed to be lost in thought, and was murmuring to herself, in a low tone, "Kate Randals—I don't like it. Kate Randals—an ugly name."

She was alluding to the time when she would bear the hated surname of my *bête noir*, Bob Randals.

"Don't you think Kate Crawshay would be prettier?" I said, desperately.

She started, blushed, and then laughed.

"Was I thinking aloud? how stupid of me! Since you do ask me, I think Kate Crawshay is a pretty name. Come, I must be getting home; dinner will be waiting for me."

We walked up to the top of the town together, I all the time repeating to myself the magic words, Kate Crawshay. Yes, beyond all question, Kate Crawshay was a pretty combination.

Day by day our friendship, if such it could be called, grew closer. She had now thrown of all reserve, and talked freely to me of her future prospects. I fancied, as the time approached when her promised husband might be expected, she grew sadder and more serious.

"Oh dear!" she said one day, after a deep sigh, "I wish I was not going to be married; I wish there was no such person as Bob Randals."

"Then why must you marry him?" I asked eagerly. "Surely, my dear young lady, there is no necessity for your giving your hand without your heart. Let me, as a friend, implore you to pause."

I was tearing away in this strain, getting quite fervid and impassioned, when she interrupted.

"It is of no use talking. I have promised to marry Bob Randals, and I must keep my word. Besides, I really like him; he is a dear good fellow—brave, honourable, generous, and of an angelic disposition; indeed, if he has a fault, it is that he is too good-natured."

"But you don't love him," I urged.

"Love—love!" she murmured, musingly. "What is love? No, I don't think I do love him, but I suppose that will come some day, when—when—we—we—are married."

She said the last words in a very sad tone, making, at the same time, a grimace. I gave vent to an angry exclamation, at which she laughed, and I of course looked foolish. What business was it of mine? I asked myself. Why should she not marry this Bob Randals, to whom she had been so long engaged?

Day after day passed, and still the expected Mr. Bob Randals did not appear. I began to hope he would not come at all. Our intimacy had now ripened certainly into a very warm friendship; on my part, it was something more; I was, I believe, madly in love with the girl. She went with me angling; we rode, walked, sailed together in my little yacht on Southampton Water.

"I think I can trust you; I think I know you," she said one day, looking me in the face steadily with those large grey eyes of hers. "I don't think you are one of those who, for vanity, would injure my reputation, or indeed any girl's, for the sake of boast-

ing. I know there are some men who, if you give them the least encouragement, either by words or innuendoes lead people to suppose they are irresistible, and the girl madly in love with them."

"Indeed, I am incapable of such meanness," I said, hotly.

"I think so," she replied gravely; "and as I like you, I shall not give up the pleasure of your society—at least, till—till——"

"Till what?" I asked, though I knew inwardly what she was about to say.

"Till Bob Randals comes."

"Confound Bob Randals!" I said mentally; then aloud—"And must you then dismiss me for ever from your presence?"

"I don't know," she said. "I think perhaps it will be best for both of us."

There was solace to my soul in the words and the tone in which they were spoken. Blindly trusting to fortune, I gave myself up to my dream of love. I hoped that Bob Randals might never come home, that she would alter her mind, that he would—anything rather than give her up.

One day I proposed that we should go over to Ryde in the Isle of Wight, in the morning steam-boat, and return in the evening. She had expressed a wish to bathe, and as there is no convenient place at Southampton, I suggested this course. She at once assented frankly, and without suspicion.

"I can take my dressing-case with me, you know," she said; "I shall require nothing else, and I dare say you can procure me the use of a room at an hotel for a short time, to arrange my hair."

"Of course," I replied; "nothing is easier."

On the following morning we embarked from the pier for Ryde. I had a small despatch-box, on which my name was engraved; she, a dressing-case in a leather cover. I carried both, and giving them in charge of a steward, went on deck, and joined the young lady by the taffrail. As I gazed on the smooth expanse of Southampton Water, the tiny waves glistening in the morning sunlight, I little thought what momentous events would have happened when next we steamed up the bay.

"Mind," she said, "I must be back to Southampton by nine o'clock, or half-past at the latest. My aunt is very indulgent, but there are some things she would never forgive."

"Do not alarm yourself," I said; "the boat from Ryde returns every evening, just as the evening falls into night."

Arrived at the beautiful watering-place, I offered Kate my arm,

and we walked together up to a first-class hotel. I gave my despatch-box and her dressing-case to the waiter, telling him the lady was going to bathe, and would require a room presently. Then I strolled out with her to the beach, and having seen her to a bathing-machine, left her, arranging to meet her at the hotel in two hours' time.

We passed a very pleasant day, dined at the table d'hôte, and then again went for a stroll. It was a beautiful evening; the sun was slowly setting in the west, red and glorious; the sea was calm, the wind low and soft. All nature seemed sinking to repose as evening came on.

"Do you know," she said, "those stupid people at the hotel thought we were going to remain? They sent your little case to my room, and the chambermaid asked whether the room was large enough. I suppose they took us for a newly-married couple."

She laughed and blushed as she related this, to which I said nothing.

"And how about the steam-boat?" she said, looking at her watch. "It is a quarter to seven. Will you inquire the exact time at which it leaves?"

I did so at the entrance to the pier, and presently returned to her.

"Twenty minutes past eight," I replied, "so that we have got more than an hour. Let us walk down to the beach. I love to see the sun go down on the sea, and listen to the soft murmur of the waves, as though singing a lullaby to hush all nature to sleep."

She assented, and we strolled down together. I said very little, and she also was silent. Never shall I forget that calm summer evening and the thoughts which had possession of my mind. I know not what was the nature of hers, but I judged by the expression on her beautiful features, and an occasional sigh that broke from her, that she was sad. We walked along the beach for about half a mile, and were returning slowly, when I heard the sound of a bell at the pier-head. It aroused me from a deep reverie; I had been building a fairy palace in the air, and its discordant jangling jarred on my ear.

"What bell is that?" I asked presently of a boatman whom I met.

"Steam-boat bell, sir, for Southampton. There she goes!"

As he spoke I saw a steam-boat glide from the pier-head, and head for Southampton.

"The steam-boat!—what steam-boat? The last goes at twenty minutes past eight; I did not know there was one so soon before."

"That's the last boat to-night, sir—twenty minutes before eight."

The man left us, and we stood staring each other in the face. I shall never forget her look of dismay, sorrow, and anger.

"The last boat!" I exclaimed.

"The last boat!" she murmured; "you have betrayed me!"

Then she burst into tears.

"I assure you, on my word of honour as a man and a gentleman, I have not done so intentionally. I must have mistaken the man when I asked. Can you ever forgive me?"

I pleaded long and earnestly before I could convince her and make my peace. At last, however, anger and distrust vanished from her face, and there remained only an expression of sorrow and perplexity.

"Oh dear!—what shall I do?" the poor girl cried distractedly. "My aunt will never speak to me again; she is the only relation I have in the world." Then again the tears flowed.

"My dear young lady—my dear Kate—pray do not distress yourself. I will treat you with every respect, and will call on your aunt to-morrow and explain everything. You can stop at the hotel where your dressing-case is; I will seek accommodation at another inn, so that there may be no possible grounds for scandal."

She grew resigned presently, convinced, I think, by my manner that it was indeed a mistake, and that I was as deeply grieved as herself. So we went back to the hotel, and I engaged the bedroom for her. In my confusion and haste, however, I forgot to say she would be alone, nor—fool that I was!—did it occur to me that I was supposed to be her husband. I remember that the young lady in the bar of the hotel asked me for my name, to enter it in the visitors' book, but I had no idea that she entered us in the book thus:—

"No. 29—Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Crawshay, from Southampton."

I took tea with Kate in the public coffee-room, and remained with her till past ten o'clock. Poor girl! she seemed very miserable, and I thought the least I could do was to remain and console her through the unfortunate affair, the result of my carelessness. At half-past ten exactly I rose and bade her good-night, intending to seek a lodging in another hotel. Here, however, I

reckoned without my host; I tried every hotel in the town, and, to my utter dismay, could not succeed in getting a room; it was July, the height of the season, and every one was engaged. Then I returned to the hotel where I had left Kate, and inquired if they had a room to let.

"No, sir—quite full, sir. Your friend will have some trouble in getting accommodation to-night."

I did not understand him at first, he seemed to think that I was seeking a room for a friend; but his next words undeceived me.

"Mrs. Crawshay has retired to rest, sir. There is a porter up all night; if your friend would like to remain in the smoking-room, sir, he can. Gentlemen are often obliged to put up with a sofa in the season."

Mrs. Crawshay gone to bed! Evidently, then, Kate was put down as my wife! I knew not what to say; not wishing to look ridiculous, I thought to turn the matter off.

"Oh—ah—yes. Well, I'll sit up for my friend in the smoking-room; he is about the town somewhere, and if he does not succeed in finding a lodging, will doubtless join me here."

To the smoking-room I went, and passed the whole long night in smoking cigars and drinking whiskey-and-water with the night-porter. About five he left me to clean the boots of the visitors, and I went to sleep on the sofa. I was aroused by the waiter.

"Fell asleep, sir, I suppose," he said. "Soda-water and brandy, sir; seven glasses of whiskey-punch you had last night, sir, and five cigars. Mrs. Crawshay is not moving yet, sir. Half-past nine, sir. Will you go upstairs to your room?"

"No, thank you," I replied hurriedly. "I'll just have a wash somewhere, go for a stroll, and return to breakfast in an hour or so."

"Very good, sir. This way, sir," said the man, as he conducted me to a lavatory. "Breakfast, sir, in an hour, sir. Daresay Mrs. Crawshay will be up by then, sir."

I gave him half-a-crown, and after making my toilet as well as I could, walked out.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" I said to myself. "I wonder what Kate will say when she hears she is Mrs. Crawshay? I only wish she really *was*."

At ten o'clock the Southampton boat came in. I waited on the

pier to see the passengers land. I had never been introduced to Kate's aunt, but having seen them together in the streets of Southampton, I knew her by sight. Kate proposed to introduce me on one occasion, but I asked her to postpone it to another day, I scarcely know for what reason.

I recognised the old lady among the passengers landing from the Southampton boat; she was evidently nervous, excited, and in great trouble. She had come in search of her niece!

Here was a dilemma! Perhaps she had heard Kate speak of me by name; indeed, I think I remember her telling me that she had informed her aunt of having made my acquaintance, as a supposed friend of Mr. Robert Randals. Doubtless, too, the young lady had been seen by some one to embark on board the Ryde boat on the day before, and it had come to her ears, or perhaps the old lady might herself have seen us.

Anyhow, here she was, evidently in pursuit of us. I kept out of her sight, and allowed her to pass me. Then the full extent of the mischief dawned upon me—the awkward and embarrassing nature of the situation. If Kate's aunt knew my name, and that her niece was last seen in my company in a Ryde boat, she would at once hasten to the hotel and inquire for me. We were entered in the books as Mr. and Mrs. Crawshay; that one fact it would be difficult, almost impossible, to explain away. Kate's character would be irretrievably forfeited; the old lady would never believe it as all an accident—that neither of us had any intention of eloping.

I walked slowly on behind the old lady. I feared she would go first to the hotel where we had put up, but, to my great relief, she stopped a porter and seemed to be asking her way, and then turned off in another direction; she was going to some other hotel first, I thought.

I need scarcely say I hurried on at full speed, and found Kate seated at breakfast in the ladies' coffee-room. She looked very beautiful. I thought there was a half-bashful, half-annoyed expression in her face, and yet I thought she seemed a little amused at the singularity of the situation.

"Come, sir—make haste; here is a cup of coffee. There is a boat in about an hour's time for Southampton. Oh, dear! what would my aunt say, if she knew this? *What would Bob Randals say?*"

There was no one in the room but ourselves. I could not help

it, but the mention of that *bête noir*, Bob Randals, shot it out of me like a bullet from a gun. Well, I won't repeat the expletive.

I felt ashamed of myself directly, and suppose I looked stupid, for she burst out laughing.

"There, there—don't look so miserably contrite. I forgive you; it might have been worse. I dare say I can explain matters satisfactorily to my aunt when we get back to Southampton."

"When we get back to Southampton! Do you know she is here, in Ryde? I have just seen her land from the boat."

"Oh, good Heaven!" she cried; "what shall I do? What a terrible misfortune!"

"Yes, indeed," I replied, gravely; "and that is not the worst of it."

"Not the worst of it!" she exclaimed distractedly, clasping her hands. "What do you mean?"

"Does your aunt know my name?"

"Yes; I spoke of you as a friend of Bob Randals, whom I had met in Calcutta. What of that?"

"Do you know I was obliged to stop in this hotel all night—sit up in the smoking-room?"

"Did they not reserve you a bed-chamber?"

"No," I said, with the courage of desperation; "they thought I had one."

"How?"

"Why, they have entered us in the books as Mr. and Mrs. Crawshay, and the waiter last night brought me a candle, and told me you had retired to bed."

"Oh, my good gracious! What a dreadful thing! Aunt will come here and inquire for you, for I suppose she knows I left in your company. Then she will discover all, and I shall never be able to persuade her that it is a mistake. What shall I do?—what shall I do?"

She wrung her hands, and I feared was about to cry.

A brilliant thought struck me—one of those flashes of genius which comes once or twice in a lifetime.

"Kato," I said, earnestly, "I think I see a way out of this trouble."

"Do you? Oh, pray tell me."

"I like you very much."

"Yes, yes; and I like you, too; but I don't see how that can help us."

"Yes it can, Kate. Dear Kate, they have entered us in the books as Mr. and Mrs. Crawshaw."

"Well?"

"Let us make it a reality. *Let us go and get married!*"

"Married?"

"Yes; why not?"

"What would Bob Randals say?"

The expletive sentence was on the tip of my tongue again, but I checked myself in time.

She suffered me to discuss the point with her.

"But we can't get married without a licence, and all sorts of things."

"Yes, we can."

"How?" she asked, opening her eyes.

"Registrar's office—an affair of ten minutes—perfectly legal."

"What, no bridesmaids, nor dresses, nor orange-blossoms?" she said, ruefully. "Oh, dear! I don't like the thought of it at all."

"Well, make up your mind quickly. What do you say? You see I am willing to sacrifice myself on the altar of friendship."

"Sacrifice, indeed, you impudent fellow! I have a great mind to say no."

"But you won't. Come, say yes, dear Kate."

I knelt at her feet, took her hand, and respectfully kissed it. She seemed irresolute.

"Come, Kate—yes or no?"

"Well—yes. There, now get up, and don't make yourself ridiculous."

And so it was settled.

* * * * *

Behold us next at the door of the Registrar's office, where the ceremony of marriage is so easily performed, and a knot tied as binding and indisputable as that by a bishop assisted by half a dozen clergymen.

The Registrar sat in an inner room, into which, at my request, we were at once shown.

"The Registrar, I believe?" I said, bowing.

"Yes."

"I have come to seek your aid, sir, in a matter whose nature I dare say you can guess."

"Ah! yes, yes," he replied, smiling, and looking good-temperedly on my beautiful Kate, as she stood by the door, shy and timid,

trembling, yet, I thought, pleased withal. "You two young people wish to be bound together in the bonds of holy matrimony?"

"Yes," I answered firmly.

"And you, young lady?"

Kate faltered out a very feeble "Yes, sir, please."

She looked so charming in her blushes and confusion, that I could have caught her in my arms and kissed her.

"Very well. It will be my pleasing duty to accommodate you."

He was a very nice fatherly old gentleman, this Registrar, with a merry twinkle in his eye, which convinced me that he enjoyed a little romance.

After a few preliminary questions, he proceeded to business. I stood by the desk, while Kate had taken a seat as far as possible from us, as though, like a victim condemned to death, she dreaded the block on which she was to suffer.

"Now, sir—your name, please."

"George Sydney Crawshay."

"Occupation?"

"Gentleman."

"Residence?"

"Chipping Norton, Oxon; Southampton; and at present this town of Ryde."

"Very good. Now the lady's name?"

He was bending over the desk, writing, and did not see my face. I felt my heart stand still. I gazed appealingly at Kate. The modest little minx would not lift her eyes from the ground.

"The lady's name, sir, please?"

This time he paused, and looked up. He could not but see my agitation and confusion.

"The lady's name, sir?" he asked again, rather impatiently. "I must fill up the form."

"Kate—Kate—Kate——" I faltered.

"Well, sir, Kate what?"

"*I don't know!*" I blurted out.

It was the truth. I had never thought to ascertain her name. Once I had asked her, and she was thinking of something else, and did not reply.

The Registrar put down his pen, and stared me in the face. Well might the worthy man look astonished.

I was speechless for a moment or so. I felt so utterly dumb-founded and ashamed, that if my life depended upon it, I could not

have explained. A low merry laugh brought me round; it was Kate. Dear girl! she could not help laughing at the absurdity of our predicament.

Then she rose, and advancing with quiet self-possession, proceeded to explain to the Registrar. As she went on, his face, at first stern—for he certainly thought we were making a fool of him—relaxed, and soon again he was all good-humour and smiles.

“Oh, I see. Well, to be sure, I have married a few couples, but never yet came across a bridegroom who did not know the bride’s name. It’s as good as a play.”

This little difficulty over, the knot was tightly tied, and Kate Coventry—for such was her name—became Kate Crawshay.

“Now, Mrs. Crawshay,” I said, gaily, “permit me to offer you my arm.”

“Mrs. Crawshay! Oh, dear—oh, dear! how strange it sounds! What would Bob Randals say?”

This time I felt no inclination to use my forbidden expletive. Kate was now my wife, and no power on earth could undo the noose Mr. Registrar Pawkins had tied.

“Mr. Pawkins, if you will join us at the hotel, we shall be very happy to have your company at luncheon, and we will drink the health of the bride; we can suppose it is a wedding-breakfast, you know. You shall represent the guests, we shall make speeches, and all that sort of thing, you know; and then, according to immemorial custom, Kate here, as we are about to drive off, shall indulge in a little weeping.”

“Indeed, she will do nothing of the kind,” the dear girl said, clinging to my arm, and looking fondly in my face. “I am very, very happy!” and here she whispered in my ear, “I love you.”

“More than Bob Randals?” I asked.

“Ever so much,” was the soft reply.

I need scarcely say, that I took the first opportunity of imprinting my first kiss on her willing lips.

Mr. Registrar Pawkins accepted my invitation, and went to lunch with us. I don’t know what the people thought, or what they did, if any came in his absence, as Kate said, to be married, christened, or buried; or what the waiters thought of the speechifying, the champagne, etc. I do know that it was the jolliest luncheon-party I ever attended in my life.

* * * * *

Behold us now, my wife and I, landing on Southampton pier.

A Peninsular and Oriental Company's mail-boat entered the harbour simultaneously with us.

"Sydney, dear," said Kate, clasping my arm suddenly, "suppose Bob Randals has come by that steam-boat!"

"Well, I am very sorry for him. It serves him right; he should have shown more alacrity in claiming his promised wife."

That same afternoon we were walking down the High Street arm-in-arm; suddenly Kate stopped, started, and gave a little exclamation.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Oh dear! here comes Bob Randals! What shall I do?—what shall I say?"

It certainly was rather awkward. I saw approaching a swarthy young fellow, wearing an East Indian solar hat, or *topee*. There was a lady on his arm. He saw Kate, and seemed almost as much embarrassed as herself. However, they were now face to face, and could not avoid speaking.

Kate, trembling and blushing, held out her hand.

"Oh, Bob! how are you? I am so glad to see you."

"How are you, Kate? De-lighted to see you."

"Confound the fellow!" I thought; "he doesn't look like it."

"By the way, introduce me to your friend."

Kate glanced at me, surprised, and half inclined to cry. She thought I was his intimate friend.

"Oh, Bob! don't you know him?"

"No, Kate."

"Please don't be angry, Bob," she said, deprecatingly, as I came forward, looking, I fear, very foolish—"indeed, I couldn't help it."

"Couldn't help what?"

"*Why, I am married*, and this is my husband."

"*Married! By Jove! and so am I*, and this is my wife."

He led the lady forward, and introduced her.

"Kate, allow me to congratulate you, old girl. We two should never have agreed; we shall do admirably as friends."

We all dined together, and I related the whole adventure after dinner. I am happy to say, that there is no man for whom I entertain so sincere a regard, and which I know is reciprocated, as I do for him whom I can now truly call "My friend, Bob Randals."

III.

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER.

A LOVE STORY.



CHAPTER I.

SWEET LUCY THORNTON was the only daughter of the Rector of Uppingham; I, the eldest son of the Squire, when first I made that young lady's acquaintance.

I had been abroad at a German university, where I had been sent to finish my education, my father thinking that a practical knowledge of German and French would be more useful than a thorough acquaintance with the dead tongues of ancient Greece and Rome.

A few months before my twenty-first birthday, when I should come into considerable property by my mother's settlement, I received a letter from my father, of which the following is an extract:—

“Our vicar, Mr. Gibson, died four months ago. The living has been given to the Rev. Hubert Thornton, a gentleman of whom everyone speaks in the highest terms, and who bears a spotless character. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word; I like him much, and anticipate much profit and pleasure in his society. I trust you will like him. He has a son, a young fellow of eighteen or nineteen, and a daughter your own age. Of the son I know little, and fear he is neither amiable or dutiful; but the daughter (I think you will agree with me when you see her) is the sweetest, most ladylike and softly beautiful girl I have ever seen; but you must not fall in love with her. There is quite a little

romance; I hear—(not officially, you understand, but these things in country places soon get talked about)—that there exists a romantic engagement between the young lady and the eldest son of the Marquis of Warborough, young Lord Houghton, as he is by courtesy called. It seems he was a private pupil of the worthy clergyman's, and being thrown much into the society of this beautiful girl, has fallen deeply in love with her."

At the time I thought nothing of this piece of gossip about the rector's daughter, little thinking how intimately her life was to be linked with mine.

A few months later I returned home for good and all, and I took up my abode at my father's country seat, looked up to and respected by all as his eldest son and heir.

The old squire and I were the sole representatives of an ancient family. The house and estates had been handed down from father to son for many generations, and the dearest wish of his heart was that I should marry well, and transmit the old name with unsullied honour to posterity.

My father and I talked over many things after dinner on the first day,—tenants' leases, improving the land, drainage, high farming, steam culture, and so forth. Presently I remembered the passage in his letter relative to the young lady, the rector's daughter.

"By the by," I said, "what about the new rector and his daughter, of whom you spoke so highly in your letter as being a paragon of beauty, etc.?"

"I'll ask them to dinner to-morrow, my boy," he said, chuckling. "See if you don't tell me she's a beauty. By Jove! if she wasn't engaged, I'd like to see you fall in love with her. I never saw a girl in my life I would so gladly call my daughter. She's a glory to her sex—gentle as an angel. The way she puts up with the hot temper and domineering manner of that brother of hers is something wonderful."

"Is the young fellow, then, so very objectionable?" I asked.

"Well, I don't like to speak ill of a neighbour's son; but I'm afraid he's what the French would call a *mauvais sujet*. I don't believe, though, that he is all bad. He is fond of his sister, and also intensely jealous of her. You know I told you in my letter that she was engaged to young Lord Houghton?"

"Yes, I remember it."

"Well, it strikes me, that the girl does not look quite so enthusiastically on the match as her father and brother do."

"What, she does not like him?" I asked.

"Oh no—not that. But from what I have seen of her, she utterly despises wealth, rank, and everything else which we worldlings look up to and worship."

"All honour to her!" I cried, enthusiastically; "I begin to feel quite interested in this rectory beauty."

"Ah! wait till you see her; you'll say then that I'm right. But don't fall in love, my boy. She despises rank and riches, and she's not a girl who would engage herself in any way unless she liked the man. I believe she likes him for himself, this young Lord Houghton."

"So I shall see her to-morrow evening at dinner? Very well," I replied, laughingly, "I shall make strong love to her."

"It's of no use, my boy; she's not to be dazzled by good looks and that dashing manner of yours. See her to-morrow evening? Of course you will. But if you'll promise not to betray me, I'll let you into a secret, and tell you how you may come upon her unawares in morning dress, not dreaming that anyone except old Bob Parry will see her in her garden dress."

"Well, father," I said, "I will certainly have a private view of this paragon of yours, if it is possible."

"And so you shall. She and Bob Parry, our old gardener, are great friends. I have given him orders to assist her with the rectory garden, which had been much neglected in Gibson's time. She comes over every morning before breakfast, when she thinks, sly little puss, that no one is about; and she and old Bob have the greenhouse all to themselves. Bob cuts her slips, and shows her how to tie up plants; gives her bulbs and roots, and they have a regular half-hour every morning of gardening business all to themselves. I saw her there by accident one morning. I was up early; I was going to give orders to Bob about something or other, I forget what, when I came on her unexpectedly face to face, with a straw hat, a cotton dress, and leather gloves. I thought she would be ashamed; but she wasn't. She only laughed, and blushed a little; said she was sorry she couldn't shake hands with me; and then went on talking about fuschias, and roses, and convolvuluses major and minor, quite at her ease."

I listened to all this, and much more which my worthy father told me about this girl, with a quiet smile of indifference and

amusement. At last, however, my curiosity was slightly aroused, and I thought that I should like to see the young lady; but by one singular coincidence and another, I missed meeting her again and again that day, till at last I felt quite chagrined about it.

I began to feel a strange interest in the girl before I had seen her. Was it a dim presentiment—a foreshadowing of the future? Or should it be attributed to a half-defined feeling of jealousy, that one described as so beautiful and loveable should bear about her, as it were, the fatal label “engaged,” and be to me and all others, except the favoured young lord—

“Banned and barred, forbidden fare?”

I know not; but this I do know, that before eight o'clock on the following bright May morning I was down, and kept a sharp look-out on the greenhouse, which I could see from the breakfast-room windows.

My first view of her I believe I should never forget, were I to live to twice the age of Methuselah. When I knew they were in the greenhouse, she and old Bob, I walked quietly across the lawn and moved round on the outside of the glass building, opposite where I knew she was; for I could see the flutter of her dress. The morning sun was shining brightly, and through an open slide I had a full view—my first—of Lucy Thornton. She was standing on the second step of one of the flower-pot stands, doing something to some plant, I don't know what, for I am no gardener; I only know that as she stood reaching upwards, her arms above her head, bonnetless, hatless, her brown hair falling loosely over her shoulders, she presented to my entranced gaze the most beautiful vision I have ever seen, before or since. The sun gleaming through the glass, from which the dewdrops had as yet scarcely evaporated, caused her figure to stand forth surrounded by a sort of halo. I did not trust myself to look on her as she stood thus for a moment or two, a living statue—a breathing, moving picture, utterly beyond the skill of sculptor or painter to approach.

I walked round and entered the greenhouse. She heard my step, and leaped down, wondering, doubtless, who it could be who intruded on her and Bob Parry at that early hour. For a moment she looked confused, she dropped her eyes, as we stood face to face; then she raised them again and looked at me; she smiled, and with charming *naïveté* held out her hand.

"Ah! how you frightened me!" she said. "At first I could not imagine whoever it could be; *now* I know you, by your likeness to the squire, your papa."

Then, seeing that I was embarrassed, she said with the most charming *naïveté*, "Lend me your hand a moment, please. I am cutting some slips from this plant. I jumped down when I heard you coming, thinking it might be a stranger."

She checked herself, and laughed such a sweet musical laugh, it went right to my heart.

"A stranger!" she went on. "I forgot you were a stranger. I have heard so much about you, and you are so like your dear, kind papa, that—Thank you, I won't be a moment about these slips, then I will talk to you."

I was as much astonished at her self-possession as I was by her grace and beauty.

After she had finished with the flowers, I escorted her back home, carrying her basket.

"I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-night at dinner?"

"Yes, I am invited with papa, and have accepted. Good-bye."

She shook hands with me, smiled prettily, and then passed through the little gate at the end of our garden, and tripped away across the churchyard to the vicarage. I stood with the gate open in my hand, and watched her till she disappeared among the shrubs of her father's garden.

"Well," said my father, as I entered the breakfast-room, "have you seen the young lady? But I know you have! What do you think of her? Did I flatter her?"

"Flatter her, sir! Flattery in her case is impossible; she is the most beautiful and loveable girl I ever saw in my life."

My father looked grave.

"Come, come, young fellow; no love rhapsodies. You know I warned you that she was engaged."

"Do not be afraid, father," I said, colouring a little. "I suppose it is possible to admire a beautiful girl without falling in love."

I met Lucy Thornton at dinner with her father on the same day. She was in evening dress—white muslin, with a simple flower in her hair. The more I saw of this gentle girl, the more I admired her. She was perfectly unaffected, and did not seem conscious of her own beauty; her conversation was light and easy, and ever and anon her low musical laugh would ring out, and my heart thrilled with strange emotions.

I was gazing at her steadfastly, when she suddenly turned her face towards me, and our eyes met; she could not but observe my fixed look of obvious admiration, and coloured up a little. I turned as red as crimson, and to hide my confusion, I asked her to take wine. Dear girl, I feared she would have been offended; but it was not so. She accepted the challenge; and after going through the ceremony of bowing and sipping, she said, in the most artless manner in the world—

“Well, Mr. Grey, you have had a good long stare. Does your humble servant meet your approval? I am dying to hear your verdict.”

This was said in the most charmingly pretty manner possible.

“Ah! Miss Thornton,” I replied, “do not ask me my opinion of you.”

“Is it so very bad, then?” she said in a tone of affected sorrow.

“No, a thousand times no; but I will not tell you, because if I did you might call me a flatterer.”

“Then pray don’t,” she put in hastily; “I hate flattery.”

The evening passed pleasantly enough. The rector, Lucy’s father, was a grave, elderly, mild, and very gentlemanly man, but I could not help thinking that his character wanted firmness. The evening passed very, very pleasantly; and the more I saw of this young lady, the more I grew entranced with her beauty, grace, and gentleness.

I wished to escort her home as they were leaving, but she declined, in a manner at which it was impossible to take offence.

“I won’t trouble you,” she said; “I have papa with me. I dislike all ceremony, and nothing annoys me so much as to make a fuss about me. I shall see you again soon. We don’t give dinner-parties, but papa shall invite you to tea some night, if you are not too grand. Good night.”

She was gone before I could say more, or even begin the pretty speech I had half framed relative to her suggestion of my being “too grand.”

I had to go to town on some business which detained me for two or three days. I did not see Lucy again for nearly a week. Then I met her coming down our broad garden walk, accompanied by a young man.

“Mr. Grey,” she said; “let me introduce you to my brother Cyril.”

I offered my hand as a matter of course, and declared I was

most happy to make her brother's acquaintance. The young man's manner and appearance did not impress me at all favourably. He was dark, short for his age, and his features, though decidedly handsome, had a reckless, defiant, devil-may-care expression. Nor was his greeting to me particularly friendly, and there shot a sudden idea through my mind that in Cyril Thornton, whom I encountered for the first time, I saw an enemy.

We walked on together for a moment or two in silence.

Lucy looked annoyed and confused, and I also was ill at ease. The presence of her brother seemed like a "wet blanket," to use a vulgar proverb.

I am naturally of a nervous, sensitive temperament, perhaps morbidly so, and an unconquerable feeling of aversion to this brother of Lucy's came over me.

I knew she was pained, as when she spoke her voice was low, tremulous, and had lost its joyous ring.

"Mr. George Grey, we were coming to ask you and your papa to take tea with us to-morrow evening; there will be only ourselves, so ~~it~~ will not be very lively, I am afraid."

"What are you talking about, Lucy?" put in her brother, sharply. "You know quite well Lord Houghton will be here to-morrow morning. I hate such affectation—as if you had forgotten!"

Not a pretty speech from a brother to a sister, before an almost total stranger. I saw the poor girl colour up, more from shame at Cyril's placing himself in such an unfavourable light before me, I thought, than anger.

"I did not know. Papa only told me that Lord Houghton thought of visiting us to-morrow," she faltered, when he interrupted rudely—

"Nonsense! I told you that Lord Houghton was coming. He wrote to me, as well as to father."

I knew it was a disagreeable subject. She, poor girl, was evidently greatly embarrassed. I pitied her, and felt as if I could have knocked down that unbridled cub of a brother.

"I don't think we need go any farther," she said, addressing me, and halting suddenly just as we reached our house. "You can give the invitation to your papa. I hope you will both come."

"I can answer for myself," I said, with some significance; "I would not on any account fail."

"Good morning," she said, giving me her hand. "Seven o'clock. Don't be late, please."

Cyril Thornton, without even the civility to say anything, or acknowledge my presence, had turned on his heel and walked back a little distance. He halted as I stood speaking to her, and said, rudely—

“Come on, Lucy, if you are coming, or you may go back alone.”

I was indignant, and naturally so.

“No, not alone, certainly; allow me to accompany you home, Miss Thornton.”

“No, no; pray don’t. I can’t explain now; but don’t. Good bye.”

I could not misread her agitation and anxiety. She wished to prevent any ill-feeling between myself and her brother.

It struck me afterwards as very strange that Lord Houghton, her accepted suitor, should write to her brother and father, and not to Lucy herself. Also it struck me, and I felt a thrill of joy at the thought, that she could not care much for this young nobleman, since she had absolutely forgotten that he was coming.

Another thing struck me also, and that was the obvious interest Cyril Thornton took in this Lord Houghton. All these points were ultimately cleared up, and I knew Lucy then as the pure, good-hearted, gentle girl she was.



CHAPTER II.

LORD HOUGHTON, whom I met at the rectory on the following evening, seemed to me a very harmless, inoffensive young nobleman. Had I been a rival suitor for the hand of Lucy Thornton, I don’t think I should have feared him much. He was very fair, passably good-looking, gentlemanly, and good-natured. He struck me as a man not capable of exciting strong emotions of any kind; you might get tired of such a character, but you could not hate or love it. Such was my impression, and the more I saw of him, the more I felt that it was right.

Can it be possible, I asked myself again and again during the evening, that Lucy Thornton loves him? My judgment told me it was not so. And yet there was the fact that she was engaged to him! I knew little of her, it is true; and yet I could not believe that she would accept as suitor, to be her future husband, a man whom she did not love.

Here, then, was a dilemma!

I did not think she cared for him. I *could not* believe she would marry a man whom she did not love. And yet she was engaged to him!

From her own lips I got the solution of the enigma, not then, but days afterwards, when we knew each other more intimately.

It is useless my attempting to disguise the fact that I was desperately in love with Lucy. True, I tried to deceive myself; but that is hardly an excuse for withholding it from my readers.

It happened in this wise. She asked me one day, with artless and serious simplicity—

“What do you think of Lord Houghton, Mr. Grey?”

“What do I think of him? Well, really, that is a difficult question to answer. You wish really to know my opinion?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, then, I think he is a good-natured, common-place sort of young man, with no particular harm about him. But—but——”

“But what?”

“He is hardly the man I should have thought likely to win you, Miss Thornton.”

“Win me?” she said, opening her eyes in unaffected surprise for a moment. “Oh! I see, you too have heard that I am engaged to him. Some people delight in spreading the report, I suppose to annoy me.”

“And are you not engaged to him?” I asked, my heart beating wildly.

“Certainly not.”

“I have been greatly misinformed, then. Is he not your suitor?”

“Ah! that is a different matter. He certainly has asked me to accept him.”

“And you refused?”

“No; that is just where the mischief lies. Papa told me beforehand that he was about to speak to me. I replied that I did not care for him, and should certainly refuse him. Then papa begged so hard, implored me at any rate not to refuse him, that I consented; and though I held out no hopes to my noble suitor, in obedience to my father, and at his own earnest wish, I did not give a decided negative. I wish I had now; it would have saved much pain and misapprehension.”

“And you are free—absolutely free?” I asked, joyfully, scarcely believing my ears.

"Certainly."

"Heaven be praised!" I ejaculated, fervently. "I was under the idea that it was not so. Now—now——"

I checked myself; my better sense told me that this was not a good opportunity to avow my love; but though the words were unspoken, she could not well misunderstand my manner. She blushed, looked confused, though not displeased; and vanity whispered that I had an excellent chance of winning my darling's love.

"Now that I have told you so much, Mr. Grey," she said, speaking quietly, and without raising her eyes from the ground, "I may as well explain all. Lord Houghton, as perhaps you know, was a pupil of papa's, who always liked him. It was through the influence of his pupil that we are now at this rectory. Papa is very fond of me, and the dearest wish of his heart is to see me in a high station. He has always urged on me the folly of sentimental marriages, and besought me many times, when I did enter the holy estate, to choose a man whom I could like and respect, but a man who was well to do in the world. My father is intensely anxious that I shall marry Lord Houghton, as he thinks it a most brilliant match for me. Hence it is that his lordship is so frequent a visitor. I was weak enough not to give him a decided refusal, and behold the result. He knows he has a friend and powerful advocate in my father, and hopes some day to overcome my reluctance."

"And what are your feelings on the point? Do you think they will in time change?"

"Never!" she said, decisively. "Events have happened lately which, even if I liked him, would have eradicated the feeling. I could never forgive a man who mistrusted me—never, never!" she said, fervently.

"Distrust you?"

"Yes; it is a painful subject, Mr. Grey, but I may as well go on now to the end. Cyril and he are great friends. It is hard to be obliged to speak against one's brother, but the truth must be told. Cyril is a great trouble to us. He is not what a son should be; he is indolent, and domineering, and not of a kind nature. Would you believe that he would undertake the office of spy on his own sister, and report all my movements, my words, and as far as he can, my thoughts, to his lordship?"

"Impossible! surely you are mistaken."

"There can be no mistake, I am sorry to say. One day he, in his domineering manner, chose to dictate to me what I should do in some matter. I questioned his right so to do, and then he coolly told me that Lord Houghton, whom I was to marry, had requested him to watch me and report to him all that occurred. I questioned him, and discovered, for he is by no means adroit or clever in concealing his thoughts, that Lord Houghton had in reality bribed him to use his influence with me, and keep all suitors, or possible suitors, at a distance. Hence his rudeness to——"

I knew she was going to say "you;" but she checked herself blushed, and said—"every gentleman who visits us."

"What do you suppose is the bribe?"

"I have told you that Cyril is indolent. Well, it seems that his lordship has promised this hopeful brother of mine that he shall be his private secretary and travelling companion—a sinecure, of course. Now, Cyril has acuteness enough to see that he enjoys Houghton's favour, not for his own sake, but mine. His object is to make me marry his patron whether I will or no. Is it not dreadfully mean and cruel on his part? It really makes me quite unhappy."

"You are sure you will never yield, Lucy?"

"Yield? I will suffer martyrdom rather than marry Lord Houghton, or any man who either distrusted me or used unworthy means to win me."

A week later, I told Lucy my love. She listened tremblingly, her eyes cast down in sweet confusion. She suffered me to take her hand and hold it in mine.

"Lucy—dear Lucy," I pleaded, "will you not answer me?"

"Yes," she said, in a low, firm voice; "I will answer you." She raised her eyes to mine, and looking me full in the face, the light of love in her deep blue eyes, said, "Although you scarcely need ask a reply in words, you wish to know if I love you, and will be your wife. Yes, I do love you with my whole heart, and I will marry you, if my father and yours consent."

I caught her in my arms, and for the first time kissed her lips.

"Lucy, dear Lucy, I am so happy! I can answer for *my* father! What of yours?"

"I cannot say. I will tell him what has passed, and will see you to-morrow. Will you call in the afternoon?"

Of course I promised to do so, and then we parted.

My hand trembled and my heart fluttered as I stood on the rector's threshold on the following day.

"Yes, Miss Thornton is in," the servant said. "Would I walk into the drawing-room?"

I had not long to wait. Lucy entered, looking very pale and sad.

"Well?" I asked, breathless, fearing from her manner she had no good news.

"It is as I expected. Papa is very angry indeed. He will not hear of it."

"Has he anything to say against my character?"

"No."

"My position and prospects?"

"No; only that they are not equal to Lord Houghton's."

"Is it possible, Lucy, your father can be so mercenary?"

"Not mercenary exactly, at least, not for himself. He has set his heart on my becoming Lady Houghton, some day Marchioness of Westerleigh. It is a great blow to him."

"And he absolutely refused his consent?"

"For the present, yes."

"Then there is no hope?"

"I do not think it is so bad as that; he may relent when he sees I am determined. I will not marry you, George, without my father's consent; but, if I live and die unmarried, I will never marry any other. I have not seen Lord Houghton yet. He will be very much taken aback at what I shall tell him."

"What will that be, Lucy?"

"I shall inform his lordship that his suit is hopeless. Doubtless he will rave and implore, and beg for time—that I may love him some day, and so on. Then I shall undeceive him. I will tell him that I love you, George, and that I will never love or marry anyone else in all the world—no, though he were an emperor, and had the person of Adonis and the good qualities of an angel."

Dear, brave girl! she kept her word, and Lord Houghton received a summary and peremptory dismissal. Of course, no man could further urge his suit when told by the object of it that she loved another.

Great was the chagrin and mortification of the clergyman at his pet scheme for his daughter's aggrandisement being thus rudely dashed to pieces; but when he saw that Lucy was quite determined, and knew that Houghton had received his final and

decisive dismissal, he made the best of it. He knew his daughter's character too well to suppose that any earthly power could make her break her plighted word.

She had promised me she would never marry any other man than myself. She had promised her father that she would not marry without his consent.

Both these promises he knew she would strictly keep; so, like a sensible man, he resolved to make the best of it. He had no fortune to leave his daughter, and loved her too well to doom her to a life of perpetual celibacy, grinding poverty, and dependence. My prospects were good. Though not noble and wealthy as the discarded lord, I should enjoy a handsome fortune, and was more than her equal in every way. But with the brother it was a very different thing. Lucy told me that the scene when he knew of the final dismissal of Lord Houghton was terrible. He raved, stormed, and even swore at her. He threatened vengeance against me, and declared he would insult me on the very first opportunity.

I cared not for his threats; but, anxious to avoid a quarrel with the brother of my betrothed wife, resolved to give no possible ground for the intended insult.

It was all in vain. The truculent young savage kept his word. He insulted me grossly. I kept my temper and scarcely answered him.

Then he insulted his sister, and called her disgraceful names.

My blood began to rise.

"Beware what you say, Mr. Cyril Thornton! Of me you can say what you please, but I will not allow you to slander Lucy."

His violence, instead of abating, increased. One thing went on to another, till at last he struck me.

Then I knocked him down.

He rose and rushed at me like a wild beast; but I was taller, heavier, stronger; and after a brief struggle he again lay at my feet, bruised and bleeding.

In spite of his mad passion and fury, he had sense enough to perceive that on equal terms he stood no chance with me. He got up, and did not attempt to repeat the attack.

"I am very sorry I have hurt you," I said; "you brought it on yourself. I should advise you to go home and apply ice, or you will have a very bad black eye."

He deigned me no answer in words, but walked sullenly away, looking the incarnation of defeated rage—a malignant fiend.

I resolved to prevent any misunderstanding with Lucy by at once giving her an account of the affair; so I went up to the rectory, where I arrived immediately after Cyril.

Neither Lucy nor Mr. Thornton could blame me when they heard the plain truth; and as the young fellow's insolence and bad conduct had passed beyond all bounds, he was banished from his father's house and sent up to town, where an appointment was procured for him in a commercial house.

And now, for a time, Lucy and I were in peace, happy in our love and in each other's society. Alas! that a storm-cloud should arise and darken so fair a sky!



CHAPTER III.

For a time all went smoothly, and no cloud ruffled the bright sky of our happiness. The first event to break the happy monotony of our lives was the sudden death of Lucy's father. The son, Cyril, came down to the funeral, and not respecting even the solemnity of the occasion, nor his sister's poignant grief, his black and threatening glances and his whole manner towards me filled the gentle girl with alarm.

Lucy concurred with me in the desirability of separating him from myself and her. He hated work, and Lucy told me he bitterly reproached her with having been the cause of his losing the promised sinecure, the private secretaryship to his sister's late suitor. Through the influence of my father we procured him a berth in a merchant's office, with a good salary and light work. The hours were only from ten till four; but though the work was light, there was great responsibility, as large sums of money passed through his hands, and it would be a difficult matter to detect embezzlement, if cleverly done.

We had no suspicion that he was not strictly honest; both Lucy and I thought that he was too proud and arrogant by nature to stoop to a mean action. We ought to have known better, and should have guarded against the result.

Cyril Thornton absconded with over two thousand pounds of his employer's money. I thought my poor Lucy would have fainted when she read the letter from the merchant prince, his employer,

informing her of her brother's infamy. The letter concluded by saying that the police were on his track, and that it was nearly certain he would be taken.

I watched the colour fade as she read the letter through; and as she handed it to me she was white as death, even to her lips.

"Poor Lucy!" I said, fondly taking her in my arms; "this is indeed a heavy blow. But cheer up, darling; his wickedness cannot affect my love for you; compose yourself, dearest, and let us see what is to be done."

Lucy's father had left her a sum of two thousand five hundred pounds invested at six per cent. This little fortune would have been sufficient to maintain her in comfort, even if she had never married.

Lucy was not ten minutes in making up her mind.

"You must take me to London at once, dearest," she said; "I will sell out the two thousand pounds, and repay Cyril's employer."

It was, I knew, quite useless to argue against her determination; so to town we went, and at the earliest possible moment we entered the warehouse of Cyril's late employer, Lucy nervously fingering the bank-notes which should repay the price of her brother's dishonesty. She was in deep mourning, her father only having been dead three months. Grant, the stern, hard man of business, looked with pity on the pale, beautiful girl when we entered; she had previously sent in her card, so that he knew who his visitor was.

"Sir," said Lucy, speaking rapidly and tremulously, "I received your letter the day before yesterday; I have brought the sum named, which my brother—brother——"

Lucy faltered; she could not pronounce the dreadful word "stole," and finally placing the notes on the table, burst into tears.

The merchant, I could see, was deeply affected. He rose, and in answer to Lucy's appeal for mercy on behalf of Cyril, rang a hand-bell, and desired the clerk who answered to send Mr. Tomkins in. I at once knew who this gentleman was, by his appearance, and the quick, searching glance he threw around the room.

A detective officer, without doubt. I was right in my conjecture.

"Mr. Tomkins," said the merchant, quietly, "You have, I believe, traced Mr. Cyril Thornton?"

"Yes, sir, he is at the Pavilion Hotel, Folkestone, and has taken a passage in this afternoon's boat for Boulogne; he will be arrested

before he goes on board. I have already telegraphed my agent to that effect."

"You will please telegraph your agent not to take any further steps. I decline to prosecute."

"Indeed, sir! we have spared no expense or trouble."

"The reward I offered was one hundred pounds; it will be paid all the same. Here is a hundred-pound note."

The man bowed, and retired satisfied.

"You see, young lady, your unfortunate brother has had a very narrow escape; had he once been arrested, I should have felt myself in duty bound to prosecute; as it is, for your sake I spare him. But mark me, young lady, he going abroad; let him remain abroad—live abroad—die abroad. As a commercial man, I hate and loathe the crime of which he has been guilty. If ever he sets foot on English soil, I will prosecute him to the utmost rigour of the law. I will, on the word of a man who never told a lie in his life!"

I felt perfectly certain, from this gentleman's manner, that he would keep his word.

Time healed the wound which this sad event made in poor Lucy's gentle heart. Cyril, profligate as he was, soon squandered the money he had embezzled; and was audacious and shameless enough to write to his sister for more.

She sent him small sums; nor could I with delicacy interfere in such a matter. At the expiration of the twelve months of mourning for her father she was to be my wife. But a month before that time there came news of her brother's death—that he was killed in a duel with a German student at Frankfort-on-the-Maine. To say that I regretted this would be a falsehood. I made no pretence of the sort; of course, however, it necessitated the further postponement of our marriage.

In spite of all I could do to dissuade her, Lucy would not remain longer at the vicarage, although the new rector and his wife—excellent people—implored her to remain as their guest until her marriage with me. Lucy was proud and determined. She would not live on charity, she said, not even on mine. She had five hundred pounds left, and the sale of her father's furniture and effects brought between three and four hundred more. This at six per cent. would bring her an income of fifty pounds a-year. She informed me of her determination, which, though I unsuccessfully combated, caused me to admire her character the more. She

could, she said, go to London, take small furnished lodgings, and make her talents available by teaching music, languages, and singing, in all of which she was proficient. She would not even allow me to take a place for her. No, she said, till she was my wife she would be self-dependent. When she was married, then it would be for me to command—for her to obey.

"I don't think you will prove very tyrannical to your poor little Lucy, will you?" she said, looking fondly in my face.

"If ever I speak an unkind word to you, Lucy, may my tongue——"

"Hush! Don't talk so, it is not right."

Lucy took a little furnished lodging in Kentish Town, London; two small, neat, and clean rooms, at the low rent of eight shillings a week.

"May I come and see you sometimes, Lucy?" I asked.

"You may see me," she replied, demurely; "but you must not come to my lodgings; it would not be proper."

"Oh, you abominable little prude!"

"No, I am not a prude, George dear. It is for your sake I have so determined. No one shall have an opportunity of saying a single word against your wife."

So I was forced to yield with as good a grace as possible; Lucy promising to meet me for a walk twice a week, in the afternoon.

I could not be far away from her; so I went up to London and took chambers.

I was well off, as far as money is concerned, and so could afford an expensively-furnished suite of rooms; also a mail phaeton and pair of horses.

Chambers and horses necessitated a groom and a valet; and for the latter I engaged a Swiss, one Pierre Zacoigne, who was highly recommended to me. I rather affected the man of fashion, and a foreign valet, I thought, would stamp me as such.

Would to Heaven that I had never seen this man! Not that I believe he was dishonest or unfaithful; but he had a natural talent for intrigue, and was of a suspicious disposition. My great delight used to be to go up to Kentish Town in my dashing equipage, and take my gentle Lucy for a drive in the country or the parks. Although I was never allowed to visit her at her humble lodging, I could write and send as often as I pleased. Pierre was the bearer of frequent notes and messages, and was soon aware of the state of the case. Then he was displeased at the thought of my ap-

proaching marriage. I was to him a liberal master, and he thought that in all probability as a married man I should dispense with a valet. At all events, I should not live in town (he had heard me say that); and to Pierre, town was the world.

Suddenly, and without any warning, there came a great change over Lucy's manner towards me. She was to meet me on a certain afternoon, but though I waited for an hour, she did not keep her appointment. In some alarm, I despatched Pierre with a note. The answer was short, and I fancied not so cordial as usual—

"I am sorry I cannot meet you to-day, but will to-morrow at the same hour.—Yours truly,—LUCY."

That was all the note contained.

On the following day I expected, not unna'turally, that Lucy would offer some explanation of her conduct. But she did nothing of the kind; and when I asked her point-blank, she looked confused, and would not answer.

"Don't ask me, dear George," she said, when I further pressed her. "I *cannot* tell you the truth, and I *will not* tell you a falsehood. You must trust me—if you really love me, of course you will."

I was not by any means satisfied; but at the time not the slightest jealous suspicion or evil thought crossed my mind. Weeks passed on, Lucy's manner was very, very strange. I could see that she was ill, and anxious about something, and felt hurt at her refusing me her confidence. By slow degrees there grew up between us a sort of estrangement. She knew that I was vexed at her, and I knew that this secret, whatever it might be, still preyed on her mind.

One afternoon she said—I fully believe more to herself than to me—

"A hundred pounds would relieve me of all this trouble, and I cannot get it."

This was so far true, inasmuch as all her little money was locked up and could not be withdrawn at once. I said nothing, but on the next occasion I met her, placed two bank-notes for a hundred pounds each in her hand.

"Here is money, Lucy. You said yesterday that a hundred pounds would relieve you of your trouble."

"You give me this money freely?" she asked, looking me in the face.

"Certainly, Lucy," I replied, gravely. "I think, however, you might confide in me—tell me the purpose for which you require it."

"You think I ought to do so?" she said, very quietly.

"I do."

"Then I will not accept the money."

She placed the notes in my hand again, and absolutely refused to take them. Nothing I could say could alter her invincible determination.

"No, George," she said, "I will not tell you the purpose for which I require this money; and as you think I *ought* to do so, I cannot take it."

I was tortured with doubt, and slowly there arose suspicion in my mind. Suspicion of Lucy! Had anyone told me a short time back that ever I should have harboured an evil thought of Lucy Thornton, I would have called the man liar and slanderer. She saw by my manner that I was unhappy. One day she took my hand in both hers, and looking me full in the face, her beautiful eyes beaming with tears, said—

"George, dear George, do trust me; please do—only for a very little while longer, and I will tell you all."

Who could resist such an appeal? I drove away all base suspicions, and for a day or two was happy. But slowly, insidiously, they crept back on me, and overshadowed my life.

About this time there was another evil influence at work. Pierre, my trusted valet, let fall a vague hint or two; and I knew by his manner he wished to make some communication, and yet feared to do so.

At last I elicited it from him, and the blood rushed back to my heart, and I almost fainted.

After a gulp of brandy, I asked him—

"Pierre, are you sure, quite sure, of this?"

"Quite sure. Monsieur had best satisfy himself. After dark, although the blinds are down, it is possible to see the shadow of any person who comes between the lamp and window in the room of mademoiselle. There may be nothing wrong, monsieur, far be it from me to say there is; but what I do say is certainly a fact."

I resolved to satisfy myself, and shortly after dusk placed myself opposite the house where Lucy lived.

My heart revolted from the thought of watching, or playing the spy on my beloved; but resistless fate, my evil destiny, hurried me on.

I saw the lamp lighted, and shortly afterwards the shadow female figure was thrown on the blind. It was that of Lucy; — recognised the outline of her graceful form instantly. I watched for a long, long time, and at last had almost come to the conclusion that my suspicions were unfounded, and that Pierre was a base slanderer.

But suddenly my heart stood still. Again a shadow is thrown on the blind. I felt faint—giddy.

“Great Heavens! It is not so—it cannot be true! A mocking vision! My eyes play me false!”

I crossed over the road, and stood close to the garden railings of the little house. Alas! there could be no mistake! A man was standing in Lucy’s room talking to her.

She had no male relation in the world.

It must then be a lover!

A thundering knock at the door, and the servant opened it; and merely saying, “I wish to see Miss Thornton,” I pushed by her and entered the little parlour. As I did so, I saw the folding doors leading to her bed-room close, and just caught a glimpse of some one disappearing. Lucy was alone when I entered. She was standing on the hearth-rug, looking pale and terrified.

“Is anything the matter? Has anything happened? You frightened me so, George.”

“Frightened you, Lucy!” I said sternly, looking her in the face. “I hoped once that my presence would not have frightened you. It was a dream—a happy dream! I am awake now, Lucy; the truth, the dreadful truth, lies bare before me. Can you explain? But it is useless to ask. I have long noted your altered manner, but never till this night knew that you had ceased to love me.”

“Ceased to love you! Oh no, no!” she murmured, piteously. “Do not think so. Believe in me—in my deep love, for just a little time longer. Trust me—do trust me, George!”

“Trust you, after to-night!”

That was all the reply I made to her request. But though there was not much in the words, there was that in the tone which awoke Lucy to the truth. I spoke with deep scorn, with a bitter emphasis on the words which she could not fail to comprehend.

“Ah!” she pressed her hand to her heart and turned ashy pale,

"you doubt me, George—you doubt my love, my truth! Is it so?"

She spoke in short gasps, and I knew she was deeply moved.

"Syren," I said to myself, "I will not be cajoled. Yes, Lucy I do doubt you. But it is possible you may be able to explain, to remove my doubts."

"How?" she asked, faintly.

"It is possible, I say, Lucy, though I think not probable. Who is the man you have concealed in your bedchamber? Throw open the door. Let him come forth and explain his business with you."

A little shriek broke from her lips; she fell on her knees by the table, and buried her face in her hands.

"Great Heaven!" she sobbed "he doubts me!"

CHAPTER IV.

I stood gazing at Lucy in silence for some time. Presently she arose, pale, her face streaming with tears, but composed.

I was astonished at the change which had come over her. There was a hard, rigid look about her, which almost frightened me.

"You have grossly insulted me by your words—words which I never thought to hear from your lips. If I explain—if I satisfy you, and prove your base, unworthy suspicions utterly groundless, it will be as a tribute to myself, not a favour to you or yielding to your demand. Leave me now, and return in ten minutes. I will then give you your answer."

She glided to the door as she spoke, held it open, and motioned with her hand for me to leave.

"Very good; I will return in ten minutes, and if you do not then satisfy me, we part for ever!"

My voice trembled with passion; but she took no heed of my threat, but opening the street door quietly closed it behind me.

I took up my post opposite, as before, and scarcely had I done so than I again saw on the blind the shadow of a man. My heart bounded with rage, I clenched my hands tightly and ground my teeth; I felt inclined to bound across the road, dash open door

or window, and take by the throat this rival—this favoured rival in Lucy's love. But I restrained myself, and watched. I saw by the shadow that the man was gesticulating violently, and gathered from Lucy's attitude, for I could see her shadow also, that she was pleading with my rival.

At last, after what seemed to me a long, long time, the man's shadow vanished; and a moment afterwards Lucy opened the front door. I hurried across the road, and she led the way to the little parlour.

"Well," I said hoarsely, "I await your explanation."

"I have none to give," she said, in a low tone; "I cannot explain——"

"Of course not," I said, tauntingly. "You and your lover have tried to hatch up a plausible tale to deceive me, and have failed. It is obvious enough. I congratulate you, Miss Lucy Thornton, and wish you happiness with the man for whose sake you have been false to me."

"False, George! Oh, do not say so!" she cried, in a piteous, wailing voice.

"Yes, yes," I shouted; "false—false!—false in heart, false in deed! For have you not at this very moment a man concealed in your room?"

"Oh, spare me—spare me!"

"Yes, I will spare you, and bid you farewell for ever!"

She started forward, as though moved by a sudden impulse, and fell on her knees at my feet, with clasped hands, tearful eyes, and oh! such a pitiful, pleading look on her beautiful face!

"George, for both our sakes, I implore you to trust in me. I love you—you know I love you; then do, for Heaven's sake, have faith in my love. On your answer depends the future of our two lives. Oh, George, George! trust me—do trust me!"

Her words were impassioned—her manner earnest; and had I not been steeled by jealous fury I must have yielded to her prayer. As it was, I mused: Could it be possible that the sweet girl before me was false—a traitress to her lover? I could scarce believe it; and gazing on her kneeling figure, my heart melted, and I yearned to raise her, and clasp her in my arms.

"Yes, Lucy, Lucy—dear Lucy, I will have faith in your love. I will trust you, and wait till you explain."

I was about to give utterance to these words, when there fell on my ears the sound of a low cough in the bedchamber.

That steeled my heart anew ; but a struggle raged in my breast before I could answer.

At last the fatal words were spoken.

"Lucy Thornton," I said, slowly and deliberately, "I will not trust you—I have no faith in your love. I believe you to be false and abandoned."

She started to her feet, stared wildly at me for a moment, then pointed to the door.

"It is over! Begone! Farewell for ever!"

I rushed away, and as I opened the street door I heard her again fall on her knees. A wailing cry and deep sobs succeeded. Then I slammed the door behind me, and went forth into the night a broken-hearted, loveless man.

* * * * *

I visited the abode of my lost love Lucy no more. But Pierre, whom I instructed to make inquiries, informed me that she had removed the following day, with all her luggage, and left no address.

Although I persuaded myself I had finally relinquished all thought of Lucy—had made up my mind never to see her again, yet this news caused a chill at my heart.

She was gone, no one knew whither; and all hope of explanation or reconciliation was now at an end.

My old haunts and habits were now distasteful to me. The country was unbearable; for had I not first seen Lucy there? Town was equally so; for had I not there lost her for ever?

The whole world was to me a desert now, and my native country especially hateful; so I made my arrangements and went abroad, determined not to return for many years, perhaps never.

My poor old father was almost broken-hearted, but did not attempt to dissuade me. I believe, had I remained, I should have gone mad. There was no cure for my disease, but fierce excitement might give me temporary oblivion.

So I went on board ship, and sailed away from the land of my birth, and my lost love, Lucy.

Where was she? What was she doing? Spite of myself, I could not drive away these thoughts. I sat on the taffrail in the evening, gazing out on the dark line of coast fast sinking out of sight, soon to be lost to me, perhaps for ever. The shores of old England faded away, but my heart was there still; yes, false, perfidious, cruel as she was, I loved her still.

For the next two years I lived a wild, reckless life. I sought forgetfulness in gay society, in stirring scenes, in dangerous adventures, the play table—and even tried to fall in love.

But it was a ghastly, a feeble attempt, a very mockery; for ever between me and the lady I was addressing there would rise up a phantom shape, and the grey eyes and sweet face of my lost love would beat back unspoken the love words which I had half framed.

Two years after my leaving England I found myself in New York. I put up at the Metropolitan Hotel, and plunged into all the gaieties and vices of that riotous city. I made many acquaintances, though no friends, and every moment of my time was occupied in some attempt at amusement. Excitement I had plenty; but despite of everything, I could not cure that evergnawing pain at my heart, or drive away the memory of Luey.

Oh, how I longed for a drink of the waters of Lethe! What would I not have given could I only forget! One evening, as I was coming up the steps of a subterranean drinking-saloon—"cellar," it was called—I met face to face one whom I had not seen for three years. It was a great shock to me. I believed Cyril Thornton dead; yet there he stood before me—Luey's brother!

There could be no mistake—the same handsome features, bearing the same reckless, defiant, sinister expression. He recognised me instantly; I could see that by the gleam of his dark eye. We stood looking each other in the face for some seconds.

Then a mocking, triumphant smile broke out on his face.

"So, Mr. Grey," he said, tauntingly, "we have met again. Do you remember when you thwarted me in England, cajoled my sister to discard a better man, and struck me down to the earth? Do you remember?"

"I am not likely to forget," I replied, moodily; "but I don't see that calling up the past does any good."

"Indeed! And have you no question to ask regarding Luey?"

I had; I longed to inquire after her. Was she well—married—or what? But my pride forbade me,

"Yes, I know, I can see in your face you would like to ask after my sister. Do you remember I told you three years ago that I would be revenged on you—that you should never marry her? You don't know how well I kept my word. I have long wished for this day. Your haggard face, your hollow eyes, do my heart good. How miserable you must be! I think you are a drunkard; ah! how Lucy would hate and despise you could she know it."

"Silence, you malicious fiend!" I cried. "Let me pass! I wish no words with you."

"No, you shall not pass," he said, savagely. "I don't fear you now. I am stronger, and you weaker—a mere wreck. You could not get the better of me now in a tussel, as you did years ago. Stay, wait till I tell you how I was revenged. You *shall* hear me. Fortune favoured me. It was I who was the cause of your quarrel with Lucy."

"How! What do you mean?"

"Do you remember her lodging in Kentish Town? You said there was a man in her room. You were right. You said she was false, that it was a lover. You were wrong—*it was I*, her brother, whom she had there concealed."

A cry broke from me. The truth flashed lightning-like over the darkness of my soul.

Her brother! I had wronged her—had accused her falsely, had refused to listen to her appeal.

I staggered, faint and giddy; I nearly fell to the ground.

Cyril Thornton watched my emotion with fiend-like joy.

"Ah!" he cried, savagely, "that touches you—that makes you wince! I heard every word that passed between you—heard you accuse her, heard her praying and beseeching you to trust her. Then she told you to go away and return in a few minutes, and she would explain. But *I*, Cyril Thornton, spoiled that. I swore to her, that if she revealed the secret that I was in the house, I would come forth and attack you with the poker—would kill you, or you should kill me. She was frightened, she believed me, and to my intense joy I heard her refuse to satisfy you. Once I thought you would have yielded, so I coughed to remind you there was some one in the adjoining room. My little scheme succeeded admirably; you left full of rage and jealousy. Lucy fell to the ground, and when I came forth from my concealment, I found her in violent hysterics. She soon recovered; her pride came to her assistance, and she cast you off for ever. When once Lucy had said it, I knew all was safe. She would not marry you now though you were an emperor, so I have no fear. Her old lover, your rival, Lord Houghton, is again urging his suit, and will succeed. As for you, no worm that crawls the street is so loathsome—so contemptible in her eyes."

"Malicious fiend!" I sprang towards him, and nerved by fury, caught him by the throat, and swung him down the steps as

though he had been a feather. He staggered, fell, and rose as if about to attack me. But as I stood awaiting him, there was that in my look which cowed him. Had there been a struggle, I believe I should have murdered him. So he wisely avoided me, and slunk away to enjoy his triumph. I rushed to my hotel in an agony of grief.

Lucy was not false. It was I, wretch that I was, who had doubted her. Thinking her brother dead, and knowing she had no other male relation in the world, I had accused her of infidelity—accused Lucy, pure as snow, steadfast in her love as the rock.

But could I not return and ask her pardon? Of course I could; and the next day saw me on board the mail steamer bound to England.

I had great difficulty in finding her out, but at last succeeded. She was the humble companion of a rich and eccentric old lady living in Hyde Park Square.

I was wealthy still, notwithstanding my reckless and extravagant life. My father had been dead six months, and I, unhappy wretch that I was, had not been by to soothe his last moments. He had left me all his property, and at about the same time a valuable reversion fell in.

I laid out more than a thousand pounds in jewellery for a present for Lucy—a peace-offering, as I fondly flattered myself.

Fool! to think that Lucy Thornton's love was to be purchased—her forgiveness bargained for!

I drove up to the house where she was in a splendid carriage and pair. I myself knocked, asked for Miss Thornton, and sent up my card.

There was a long interval, during which I waited in the reception-room, and began to fear she would not see me. But I was wrong. The servant returned and ushered me up to the drawing-room, to the presence of my lost love, Lucy.

She stood in the centre of the room, facing the door.

Our eyes met. With a quick glance she swept my form, and there stole over her face an expression of pity and sorrow.

Was I so changed?

But this gentle look was succeeded by a hard, stony expression. "To what do I owe the honour of Mr. Grey's visit?"

There was no music in her voice now—harsh and grating, it caused me to shudder. Could this be the same Lucy who had

hung on my arm—looked proudly in my eyes, and murmured words of love in soft dulcet tones?

It was Lucy; but so changed! Beautiful, more beautiful than of old; but paler, thinner, and with none of that soft yielding gentleness, her greatest charm. My cruelty had changed her nature.

“Lucy, Lucy,” I said, “for Heaven’s sake, do not speak like that! I come to ask your pardon—to throw myself at your feet, and pray of you to love me, wretch that I am! How could I have doubted you? Forgive me, dear, dear Lucy! My carriage, *your* carriage is at the door! And see, here are jewels! Let it be as a peace-offering between us. I am still rich, Lucy. Come, my darling, say you forgive me.”

“I forgive you, George Grey; from my heart I forgive you the cruel wrong you did me. But do not deceive yourself, I no longer love you; there is not within my breast one spark of affection remaining. Had there been, I would not have seen you; and I do so in order to tell you to give up, now and for ever, all thought or hope of me. I do not hate you, but I despise you, as you once despised me. More than two years ago you doubted my love—dared to cast an aspersion on my honour, and were deaf to my prayer when I knelt at your feet. Now you come back, with a carriage and pair and a casket of jewellery, thinking to win back the love which you so wantonly alienated. It is in vain——”

I interrupted her, and pleaded long and earnestly for mercy. I told her of my misery; how I had been a wanderer on the face of the earth—had sought in vain peace of mind, or even forgetfulness. She listened to all I had to say, and I could read at times pity and sorrow in her pale face. But when I had finished, she said, calmly—

“I am sorry for you, but shall not alter my determination. You slighted, scorned, and in thought dishonoured me. As you behaved to me when I knelt at your feet, so do I now to you. Leave me; I am deaf to your prayers—inexorable. I tell you, George Grey, I no longer love you! Begone! Your carriage awaits you. Take your baubles; I value them no more than I do your false love. Adieu.”

She walked quietly forward, and opened the door for me to pass out.

“Lucy, Lucy,” I cried, “one word. I leave you now, perchance for ever—to go forth on the cold, dreary world, never, never to see

your dear face again. I have sinned, and I must bear the penalty. I do not murmur. I will trouble you no more. But, for the memory of 'Auld Lang Syne,' promise me one thing. When I lie on my death-bed, be it in one year or after a long pilgrimage in this dreary world, promise me, that if I send to you, you will come and give me your forgiveness. I accept the life of misery you doom me to. At least enable me to die in peace."

Her eyes were moist with tears, and her voice trembled as she replied, "If it be in my power, I promise you; but do not mistake me—my determination is unalterable, so seek not to communicate with me in any way. If you write, I will burn the letter unopened. Good night. God be with you."

I offered my hand, but she shrank away with a slight shudder.

Then I went forth from the house, utterly crushed in spirits—a wretched, broken-hearted man.

* * * * *

Of the next two years of my life I will say but little. I plunged wildly into a career of dissipation and extravagance. I drank hard, played high, and health and fortune alike suffered.

At last I found myself all but a penniless outcast on the wide world. Gone was my fair patrimony; gone alike health and spirits. My form, once upright and comely, was now thin and bowed down; my face, once handsome and beaming with health and good-humour, was haggard, pale, and marked by the lines which misery and dissipation had traced.

Down, down, lower and yet lower, I sank in the social scale, till I found myself absolutely penniless in the streets. A fierce fever seized upon my weakened frame, and consciousness forsook me. When my reason returned for a few minutes, I knew I was in a hospital.

The physician told me I was dying. I felt a fierce joy; the hour had come for Lucy to fulfil her promise. With faltering utterance I implored a messenger might be sent to say that George Grey lay dying, alone, in misery and poverty. The messenger went, but no Lucy came.

Again a paroxysm of fever seized me; I howled and raved in horrible delirium. After two days I again awoke to a consciousness of life, but weak and utterly helpless. I felt myself fading away. Visions floated about my bed; I was no longer raving, but rather light-headed and feebly delirious.

Who is that flitting about my bed, surrounded by a halo of glory?

A phantom—a spirit? Yes; I have seen many such in the latter part of my illness.

“Lucy, Lucy! my lost love, Lucy!” I murmured, faintly.

What hand is that laid on my burning brow? What eyes are those tenderly bent on my face?

Was not that a kiss I felt on my parched lips?

What voice is that murmuring sweet melody?

An angel's hand—an angel's kiss—an angel's voice.

Then all is darkness again. I sleep a deep, deep sleep.

When I awake, I still see a phantom shape hovering about my bed.

“Lucy, Lucy! my lost love, Lucy!”

“Thank Heaven, he speaks; the delirium is leaving him.”

Then I heard another voice—

“If his strength tides him over the next hour, he may recover. Give him wine.”

This, at all events, was no phantom—wine was poured down my throat; and revived thereby, I could fix my wondering gaze on the angel form.

“Lucy, Lucy! is it indeed you, Lucy? Kiss me, and let me die.”

“Hush, darling; don't talk of dying. Go to sleep.”

I felt a warm kiss on my cold forehead, and soon fell asleep again.

When I awoke, I was stronger and quite sensible. A lady dressed in black sat by my side. At first I thought it one of the angels I had seen in my delirium. It was indeed an angel, but an angel in woman's form; and as I gazed, I recognised the features of Lucy.

“Lucy, Lucy! is it indeed you?” I murmured; “or am I mad—or dreaming? Ah! no, it is you—I remember now; you have come to fulfil your promise, and see me die. God bless you, my darling—my lost love, Lucy!”

“No, no!” she cried, and fell on her knees by the bedside; “not lost, dear George; I am yours again—yours for ever, my own darling! your old love—your Lucy—your own Lucy, who has never ceased to love you!”

I nearly fainted with joy, and could scarce believe it was not all a phantasm of the imagination.

But as I gathered strength, I knew that it was true.

“George, darling, I have been very cruel. Forgive me, and may Heaven forgive me. I was away when your first message came;

but it was forwarded to me, and then a special train brought me to London in the dead of night. God be praised, I was not too late. You are recovering, dear George, and we will be happy yet."

"Lucy, I am a beggar—utterly and irretrievably ruined."

"No matter, dearest; I am rich. The old lady with whom I lived is dead, and has left me all her fortune."

"No, no, Lucy; I will not rob you, or live on your bounty. I am penniless—an outcast—a beggar!"

"But, George, I love you."

The words sank deep into my heart, and a thrill of joy pervaded my enfeebled frame. I could scarce believe in the reality of such unlooked-for, undeserved happiness.

"She loves me—she loves me!" I murmured, repeating the words again and again to myself, as though unable thoroughly to realise the delicious fact.

Presently, as if to dissipate the last remnant of doubt in my mind, she bent her face down to mine, and kissed my lips.

I threw my arms around her neck, and with what little strength I had left I clasped her to my heart.

"You love me, Lucy! Ah! then I am rich indeed. Now I can die happy."

"No, no, George; you shall not die. You shall live for my sake, and for love of me. I cannot lose you, my own darling—my stricken deer!"

And I did not die; but, thanks to Lucy's tender care, lived to bless—to love—to revere her.

May the Almighty shower blessings on her head! May her path through life be strewn with roses, and the gates of heaven be thrown open wide to receive her, when at the end of this pilgrimage her spirit shall soar on high. When I was wealthy and proud, she scorned me justly; when I was poor and miserable, dying on a bed of charity, she came to my side. Her tender care gave me life, and, more precious than life, her love. Lucy, dear Lucy, my own darling wife—no longer my lost love, Lucy!

IV.

BALTHAZAR;

OR, THE STEEPLE CHASE



CHAPTER I.

PLOT AND COUNTER-PLOT.

THAT Lady Julia Tollemache—daughter of an earl, niece of Sir Frederick Legrey, with whom she was staying on a visit—should have many suitors, was not wonderful. Though not rich, she was high-born, and a splendid specimen of female beauty. Proud and haughty, one would have thought that she could never have bestowed her affections on any one not of high rank. The Marquis of Montserrat—heir to a dukedom, and immensely rich—sought her hand in marriage. The match would have been in every sense an eminently advantageous one. He was passionately devoted to her—her abject slave. And yet, though he was ready to lay heart, title, and fortune at her feet, Julia did not give him much encouragement. She did not dismiss him entirely, but seemed loth to lose so wealthy and distinguished a suitor, and at the same time more loth to accept his offer. Of course, there was a reason for this; and that reason, love; for the beautiful and proud Lady Julia knew and loved Jasper Lawrence—the second son of Squire Lawrence, a plain country gentleman. This Jasper was a man of imperious temper—handsome as Antinous, in Julia's eyes the *beau ideal* of manly beauty. He, too, loved her—wildly, passionately. Hitherto their attachment had remained secret, by Julia's wish; for she could not subdue her pride sufficiently to own herself engaged to one who, like Jasper Lawrence, had neither wealth, position, nor title to boast of.

Lady Julia had a cousin many years younger than herself, a girl of seventeen. Florence Legrey was in her own style as beautiful as her cousin. She had large melting blue eyes, fair hair, a lovely face, and figure lithe, graceful, and agile as that of a fawn. Now, Miss Legrey was also in love—had bestowed her heart upon Walter Lawrence, Jasper's younger brother. There was another suitor for the hand of the fair Florence; her cousin, Lord John Tollemache had been taught, or had taught himself, to regard her as his future wife. But though Florence liked Julia's brother, the heir to the earldom, as a cousin, she had no intention of ever calling him by a dearer title. Thus, then, affairs stand: the Marquis of Montserrat and Jasper Lawrence are each suitors for the hand of Lady Julia Tollemache; while Lord John and Walter are respectively in love with Florence, the fair daughter of Sir Frederick Legrey.

But neither of the noble suitors are fortunate—the two handsome sons of Squire Lawrence having each gained the heart of his lady-love. In the approaching county steeple-chases both Lord John Tollemache and Walter Lawrence had a horse entered. His lordship's was a splendid animal called Balthazar; that of Walter Lawrence a thorough-bred little chestnut mare—a splendid fencer, and fleet as the wind. The mare was named Firefly; and though many thought well of the chance of Tollemache's splendid animal, Firefly was decidedly the favourite. Both were backed heavily.

One morning, Lord John Tollemache sought his sister, Lady Julia.

"Julia," he said, "to-morrow the Marquis will propose to you. You must of course accept him."

"Of course! Why so, pray?"

"Because he is rich, and a marquis. Is not that sufficient?"

"No," replied Julia, decisively; "not enough for me."

"Julia," her brother went on, "you *must* marry him."

"Must?"

"Yes, must, or I am utterly ruined."

"Ruined! I do not understand you."

"I will explain. The Marquis is rich—immensely so; money is no object to him. During the last week I have lost forty thousand pounds to him."

"You have gambled with him, and lost such a sum!" cried Julia, in dismay.

"I have been playing *écarté* with him every night. We began

by playing for small stakes; insensibly as I lost I increased them, and now he holds my promissory notes for forty thousand pounds."

"Forty thousand pounds!"

"Yes; and that is not the worst of it. I have backed my horse Balthazar, and laid against Mr. Lawrence's mare, Firefly. She is likely to win. I think from what I hear she can beat my horse. In that event, I lose fifty thousand more."

"And if Firefly does *not* win?"

"Then Balthazar will; and I shall win between forty and fifty thousand—enough to clear my debt, and leave a balance in my favour."

Julia remained in thought for some few moments. "Meet me this evening," she said. "I can, I think, help you."

"Yes; by marrying the Marquis. I know that, and that only, will purchase his forbearance."

"But suppose Balthazar should win?"

"Balthazar cannot win; the mare is too good for him."

"Do not alarm yourself. I promise you that Firefly shall not win."

"You, Julia! How can you promise such a thing?"

"No matter. I will see you this evening. Do not question me further."

Lady Julia immediately ordered the carriage, and drove over to Lawrence Hall. It was Jasper whom she went to see, and fortunately she met him in the grounds, and was spared having to drive up to the house. Alighting, she ordered the carriage to wait, and walked on through the shrubbery with her lover.

"Jasper," she said, at once coming to the point, "your brother's mare, Firefly, must not win the steeple-chase."

"But she will win, Julia. Nothing else has a chance against her."

"She must *not* win, I tell you! If Firefly wins, I must marry the Marquis of Montserrat."

Seeing his astonishment and bewilderment, she proceeded to explain. Jasper listened to all she had to say.

"I don't see how I can help it. Walter is anxious to win. He is, like all our race, headstrong; and nothing will turn him from his purpose."

"Then you must manage it, Jasper."

"How is it possible?"

"You must lame the mare yourself, Jasper—or drug her, or something. I have read of such things being done."

Jasper looked aghast at the contemplation of such treachery, and so expressed himself.

"As you please, Jasper; you know the alternative! The Marquis will propose to me to-day or to-morrow. I will tell him he shall have my answer on the evening of the steeple-chase. If Firefly wins, I shall accept him. If not, I will refuse."

"That is your determination?" he asked.

"It is!"

"Then I will do it, Julia. I would risk my soul rather than lose you!"

They parted; but neither knew that their conversation had been overheard by Bob Flinders, the groom who tended Firefly, and who loved the mare as the apple of his eye.

Bob Flinders at once acquainted Walter Lawrence with the intended treachery, not mentioning, however, who it was who proposed to lame his mare. The young man was justly indignant. They consulted together, and presently hit upon a plan. The mare should be removed to a neighbouring town, and it should then be reported she had fallen dead lame. In order to give colour to this, Bob Flinders would, by a trick with which he was acquainted, cause her to appear so. This would throw those who wished to lame her off their guard, and thinking it needless, nothing would be done.

The next day it was bruited abroad, far and wide, that Firefly was lame, and had no chance. Lady Julia heard the news, as did Tollemache and the Marquis. Julia thought her lover had accomplished this, and he, congratulating himself on being saved from committing so bad and cruel a treason, did not undeceive her.

On the morning of the race, the Marquis of Montserrat drove over in his drag-and-four to breakfast at Sir Frederick Legrey's. He had already offered to drive Florence and Julia to the race-course, and had promised to secure an excellent position near the grand stand. The ladies accepted; and the party consisted only of themselves and Lord John.

Shortly after breakfast, Lord Montserrat watched his opportunity, and drew Lady Julia on one side. "The time you named, Julia," he said, "for giving me a definite answer, expires to-day. I ask you again—will you, or will you not, accept my hand and share my coronet?"

"Oh, my lord," she answered, evasively, not without some

embarrassment, "let us postpone it till the evening. My mind is so occupied with this race, that I can scarcely think of anything else. Do you know, I have a wager with Florence; and if Firefly wins, I shall lose this beautiful bracelet."

"And if Firefly wins," said his lordship, "I shall win a large sum of money; but if Balthazar should be the fortunate horse, your brother will be a large winner from me."

"Then I'm sure I hope Balthazar will win," Julia said, forcing a laugh, "for my brother's sake and mine!"

"Thank you, Lady Julia," he replied, "for your good wishes!"

"Ah! Now, don't look cross! You know it is only natural I should wish for my brother's success."

And Montserrat certainly did look far from pleased; but it was not on account of Julia's good wishes for her brother's horse, but of her too obvious indifference to his claims.

"This evening then, Lady Julia, shall decide my fate! I hope and trust the answer will be favourable."

"Oh, Marquis," she said, deprecatingly, "how impetuous you are!"

Whatever Montserrat may have thought, he said nothing. The eventful question stood over till the evening.

* * * * *

And now we will transport our readers to the scene of the steeple-chase.

The four-horse coach of the Marquis of Montserrat was posted on a piece of rising ground close to the grand stand, whence a view of the whole course could be commanded. Julia and Florence were provided with seats on the box, while Lord John and the Marquis stood on the roof. There were one or two minor cases before the "great event," which served to accustom the ladies to the sport, and, as it were, educate their appetites.

The brothers came over together on horseback, while the old squire drove in the dog-cart. Walter was in high spirits, and confident; and Jasper, also thinking Balthazar sure to win, was in a good humour.

"You really mean to start Firefly, then, Walter?" asked the latter.

"Start her! I should think so! And ride her—and win with her!"

"What! lame as she is! Why, I might as well think to win with Yeoman here!" patting the grey he rode on the neck as he spoke.

Walter laughed.

"Why don't you ride him in the race, Jasper? He is entered. You have only to pay the entrance money, and go in for victory. You can borrow a jacket and cap. What do you say? I should like to see the fun."

Even Jasper smiled at this—so ridiculous did it seem; for be it known, the grey Yeoman, though entered, had never been trained. As the brothers well knew, he could have no chance with Balthazar and Firefly, if the latter had not been lame, as was supposed.

"Well; wait till you see Firefly, Jasper," Walter went on. "Lame as she is, she'll want a deal of beating."

"Why, when did you see her, Walter? You don't mean to say she is sound?"

"I gave her a two-mile spin yesterday afternoon, my boy. She went splendidly, and cleared Aston Brook like a bird!"

"Nonsense!" said Jasper, uneasily. "Why, I saw Jacob only yesterday morning, and he was complaining in fine style of the mare's lameness."

"Did you see her?"

"No; I did not trouble to——"

"Then, as I said before, wait till you do."

Jasper was now seriously alarmed. So well had the secret been kept, that he believed the mare was hopelessly lame, and had not a ghost of a chance. Indeed, he thought Walter mad to start her, and put it down to his enthusiastic, hopeful nature. Suppose the chesnut really fit to run—her lameness of no great consequence—she would then have an excellent chance against Balthazar; and should she win, Lady Julia would accept Lord Montserrat.

That very morning, a few minutes before starting, he had received a note from her, telling him that she was to give a definite reply to the Marquis in the evening, and concluding with impressing on him the necessity of Balthazar's victory. Julia knew little about horses, and did not attach the same importance to Firefly's lameness as did Jasper. She had a harassing fear that the latter was over-confident, and that after all the race might result in the defeat of Balthazar and the victory of Firefly. How well grounded that fear was will be seen by the sequel.

No more was said on the subject by the brothers; but Jasper did not at all like Walter's sanguine, gay manner.

That he hoped to win, there could be no doubt; and he was now

tormented with a suspicion that he might have overrated the probable consequence of the chesnut's lameness.

He had no suspicion whatever of the real state of the case. Before the race commenced, the brothers went to the paddock to look at the horses engaged in the various stakes. Balthazar attracted universal admiration, from his great size and his proud walk.

Jasper awaited anxiously for the arrival of Firefly, and on seeing her approach, led by the whip Bob Flinders, he hastened to examine and criticise her.

To his dismay, he could discern no sign of lameness in her walk. She was closely wrapped with horse-cloths, and he could not well judge of her condition or appearance.

"Why, Bob, she doesn't walk lame a bit!" he said to the careful trainer.

"A deal better to-day, sir—a deal better. Shouldn't be surprised if she ran very well."

"Ah!" said Jasper, "I suppose she's lame in her gallop. She'll break down then, I suppose, Bob?"

"We shall see, sir—we shall see! Afraid she will."

Jasper, although he tried hard to persuade himself that it was as he wished, felt every moment more and more uneasy. He made his way along the course to the carriage on the box of which were Lady Julia and Florence Legrey.

Mounting the wheel, he was enabled to speak to the former, who bent down towards him.

"Julia," he said, in a hoarse whisper, and evidently in great annoyance, "I have seen Firefly! I can't discover that she is in the least lame!"

Florence Legrey now saw him, and said, innocently—

"Oh, Mr. Jasper, your elder brother has just been here. We heard a report that Firefly was lame; he tells us that it is quite untrue—that the horse is perfectly well, and, as he expressed it, fit to 'run for a man's life.' I am so glad!"

Florence really looked pleased; but not so Julia and Jasper.

"I am afraid it is so, and that his lameness was all fancy. If it is so, Balthazar will have a poor chance, Jasper. Remember, Firefly must lose at all hazards. Balthazar must win! This day decides my fate!"

Jasper muttered to himself for a moment or two, then he leaped from the carriage-wheel.

"Yes; by Heavens, I'll do it! She shan't win! Anything rather than that!"

He hurried to the grand stand, and, to the utter astonishment of the stewards, insisted on paying the entrance-money for Yeoman, his own grey horse.

This done, he next proceeded to borrow a jockey's suit, and in half an hour had changed, and was ready to weigh for the race.

Imagine the amazement of Walter and John, when they saw their brother enter the paddock in jockey costume.

"Why, what now, Jasper!" exclaimed Walter. "Are you mad? You are not going to ride!"

"Indeed I am, though—and win, too."

"Why, what are you going to ride?"

"The grey, of course."

Walter and John both stared in the utmost astonishment. Then the latter burst out laughing.

"What, Yeoman! Why, he's not trained, and is as big as a barrel. You must be mad to think of such a thing!"

"Well, mad or not mad, I mean to ride the grey, and win, if I can."

There was something strange about the manner and expression of Jasper, which neither of his brothers could make out. They knew that he really meant to ride Yeoman in the race; but what was his object, for the life of them they could not divine.

That Jasper, accustomed all his life to horseflesh and field-sports, could have any idea of winning, was absurd, in the grey's then condition. Nor was his demeanour consistent with the supposition that he was doing it for a joke.

There was a restlessness in his manner, a look in his eye, which belied anything of the kind; and so they were perforce compelled to remain in the dark as to his motive.

And now the course is cleared; and down the course comes the splendid Balthazar, taking his preliminary canter. His fine appearance, great size, long swinging stride, and proud action, elicit universal admiration.

Next come two other competitors—Blanche and Hercules, who, as they are supposed to have no chance, were not much noticed by the knowing ones.

Cherry-ripe, Topthorn, and Yeoman (Jasper's grey), were the next three, making six out of the seven competitors who were to start.

Presently there is heard a buzz of admiration, arising first in the grand stand, and quickly taken up by the outsiders and the general spectators—

“There she is! Ain’t she a beauty! Firefly wins! Green and gold for any money!”

At a sharp gallop Walter Lawrence’s little mare came bounding down the course. The sun was out, and her glossy coat shone like satin in the light. In the tip-top of condition, with a light, quick, bounding action, full of life and energy, the mare looked magnificent, and every inch a winner. In vain did the good judges seek for any, even the slightest, tenderness in her going. The mare was not lame—sound as a bell—in splendid fettle. Walter sat her, in proud consciousness of her beauty and fitness, his green and gold jacket and cap by far the handsomest and most conspicuous of any.

A bright blush mounted to the fair cheek of Florence Legrey as she saw her champion ride by, and involuntarily she said to herself—

“What a beautiful creature Firefly is! And how handsome she looks!”

Even Tollemache, who was not a particularly good judge, looked very grave as the dangerous chesnut passed the carriage.

“I thought she was lame,” he muttered to Julia, in a low tone; “but, for the life of me, I can’t see it.”

Lady Julia knew even less than her brother about horseflesh, and so consoled herself by saying—

“It is a very beautiful creature, this Firefly; but beauty is not the only thing requisite to win a race.”

Walter, as he galloped past the stand on Firefly, took off his cap to Lady Julia and Florence; and the latter forgave him for his late escapade, and bestowed on him a bright smile.

Jasper was close behind, and regarded his brother’s mare with great interest. As he passed the ladies, he too looked that way, and Julia could see by his face that something was wrong. He was very pale, and there was a black frown on his face, also a compression of the lips, which spoke eloquently enough of his dissatisfaction. As though moved by a sudden impulse, he reined in his horse, leaped from the saddle, and giving the bridle to a boy, went up to the carriage.

“Julia,” he said, in a low tone to the lady, “Firefly is not lame—never could have been lame. We have been deceived. The

mare will win, if something is not done. Never saw her in such condition—never saw her go so beautifully; she'll come in first, by a field or two. Everything is in her favour."

"You know the consequence, Jasper."

That was all she said; and as she spoke, the colour forsook her face, and her eyes gleamed strangely.

"You mean it? There is no alternative?"

"None—none! I shall seek none."

"Then the mare shall not win."

He clambered on the step, and approaching his face close to hers, said—"The consequences may be serious—perhaps fatal."

"Fatal! To whom?"

"To me or my brother—perhaps to both."

"I don't understand you," she said, tremblingly.

"Ah! you will see. Watch the race; Firefly shall not win."

He leaped down, and hurried away. She called after him, but he did not or would not hear her.

CHAPTER II.

THE RACE.

THEY'RE off! They're off! There they go! They're off!

A cry from the stand, taken up by many voices, proclaims the fact that the horses have started. The course is about two-and-a-half miles long, so they have to go twice round to make the five miles fixed upon. It is all meadow land, with five big ditches, several stiff fences, two brooks, and a rasper leading into the last field. This is the "big jump," and consists of a deep and wide ditch with posts and rails on the off side; at any time a formidable obstacle, but to tired horses a very dangerous one.

At first, from the stand, only a dark spot can be seen gliding across the meadow in which is the starting-post. But soon the dark patch lengthens out, and as the horses gallop on they can be seen separately. One, two, three, five—and two close together, neck and neck, sweeping swiftly on, rising in quick succession to each leap, come to the corner, and after being hidden for a moment or two from the view of the anxious spectators, a single horse is seen galloping down the hill towards the big brook.

It is the grey, Yeoman, ridden by Jasper Lawrence, nearly a quarter of a mile ahead, and making the running at a great pace.

As they approach, the colours of the riders and the horses can be distinguished. Next to the grey comes Balthazar, in splendid style; then the other four, and last of all, Firefly, hard held by Walter Lawrence. As they come upon the slope, however, he gives her her head, and like a flash of lightning the fleet chesnut shoots by the four horses, and comes up on Balthazar's quarter.

Again Walter holds her in, though it is evident he could go ahead if he chose.

The grey takes the brook first, and clears it, though not easily; then comes Balthazar, who appears to take it in his stride almost; a second or two after him Firefly, with a quick rush, takes it flying, and is half-a-dozen yards ahead of the black before Walter can pull her in.

Some of the ladies, seeing Yeoman, the grey, so far ahead, think he will win; but good judges know that the horse is blown, and all but beaten.

"The grey is first!" cried Florence, in tones of disappointment, "and Jasper will win."

She saw that Walter, on Firefly, had again fallen back to the third place. Two out of the other four had fallen at the fence, while another refused it, only one coming over safely. The field was now reduced to four—the race practically to two; for Yeoman was almost beaten, and Tophthorn hopelessly behind. Shouts of enthusiasm and encouragement greeted the two favourites as they passed the stand, the chesnut close on the quarter of the black.

Both were fresh and going well, nor had whip or spur been used. But it was noticed that Firefly was hard held, and not going at anything like her top speed.

In this order they pass the starting-post for the second time round. Now, however, a change comes over the relations of the stud. Yeoman has "shot his bolt," and the other two rapidly overhaul him.

Suddenly an exclamation breaks from John Lawrence, who is on the top of the stand by the side of his father.

"Why, what is Jasper thinking of? He's gone the wrong side of the flag!"

And, to the surprise of himself and many others, the grey was now seen making across the fields straight to the corner, having left the course altogether.

"Why, he must have mistaken the course," said Squire Lawrence.

"No, I think not; the grey is dead beat. See the whip going; he knows he has no chance, and is coming across to see the finish."

It almost seemed as if such must be Jasper's intention; but, to the surprise of those who watched him, he again entered the course at the corner, having by his short cut saved a great distance and two heavy leaps.

The horses disappeared for a few seconds behind the rising ground. When they again came in sight, Jasper, on the grey, was nearly a quarter of a mile ahead.

He could be seen urging his horse down the slope with whip and spur, looking back occasionally.

His conduct was quite inexplicable. He could not win, even if he passed the post first; for he had not complied with the conditions of the race.

It is now that the interest of the contest commences.

The jockey riding Balthazar, looking back over his shoulder, sees Firefly coming up on his quarter. Hitherto the black has not been touched by whip or spur; now the rider's arm is seen upraised once or twice, and the horse, in response to the slash of the whip, bounds forward, and stretching out to his best pace, leaves Firefly again behind.

But at this moment Walter is seen to bend forward, give the mare her head, and square his elbows; he does not raise his whip, nor does he seem to spur her. The gallant creature seems to fly over the green turf, and the clatter of her sharp, quick gallop warns the rider of Balthazar that the struggle is now to commence in earnest.

Intense is the excitement as the two competitors approach the brook together. Firefly rapidly overhauls Balthazar; now she is on his quarter; now they are neck and neck.

Whip and spur. Slash—slash—slash!

The glossy coat of Lord Tollemache's horse is marked by wheals, and blood follows the digging of the spurs into his flanks.

Furiously he plunges ahead, smarting from the pain, and again Firefly is left a few lengths behind.

But Walter seems confident, and never raises his whip. He bends over his mare's neck, shakes the rein, and gives her a cry of encouragement. Stretching her neck, and laying herself down to her work, away she flies with the speed of the wind.

Intense is the interest at the stand as the two are seen ap-

proaching the brook. The sun is shining brightly on the green and gold of Walter and the azure blue of Balthazar's jockey.

Florence and Julia have mounted to the top of the coach, and both are gazing with wild excitement on the two horses.

"Balthazar is first! Balthazar is first!" cries Lady Julia, exultingly. "Balthazar must——"

"See, see!" cries Florence; "Firefly is catching him up! They are level! Firefly is first—Firefly wins!"

Lord Tollemache turns deadly pale as he sees the little mare shoot by his horse—the former untouched by whip or spur, the latter struggling fiercely on, but severely punished.

"It is all over," said the Marquis of Montserrat, shutting up his race-glass. "Firefly wins in a canter!"

And indeed it seemed almost a certainty. She shot by the black like an arrow.

Florence could see Walter look back over his shoulder, with a satisfied smile, at his almost defeated opponent whipping and spurring in the desperate hope of retrieving the race.

Then Walter is seen to steady the mare for the last brook.

No one has any doubt that she will clear it, and win easily, for she is quite fresh, and a splendid fencer.

Jasper, on the grey, had been for some time almost unnoticed by the spectators, whose attention was fully engrossed by the other two.

He was still ahead, having, by the short cut he made, and the liberal use of the whip and spur, managed to retain that position hitherto.

He was riding obliquely towards the last fence and brook, in such a way as to cross the track of Firefly.

The space between the flags here was narrow, and at first it seemed that he was only going to get in the line preparatory to taking the brook; but second by second he edged up, so as to get almost right in front of Firefly.

Walter shouted—"Keep to the left, Jasper!—keep to the left! or you'll foul me and baulk the mare!"

Jasper made no reply. He was very pale; his teeth clenched—his eyes gleaming wildly.

Walter was too intent on his mare to notice this; and checking her speed, he pulled her together, and rode her at the brook.

Suddenly, there arose a loud cry from the occupants of the stand, the carriages, and everyone who could command a view.

Just as Firefly was about taking the leap, the grey was seen to charge full upon her flank. The mare attempted the leap, nevertheless, and cleared the rails and brook; but she failed to keep her feet, and fell headlong on her side, pitching Walter yards away, where he lay still and motionless.

At the same moment, Yeoman, the grey, unable to stop, broke through the posts and rails, and blundered into the big ditch. Balthazar coming up behind, answered to his jockey's call, and took the leap; but at the moment he did so, he shied at Yeoman struggling with his rider in the water, and jumped short, just getting his fore legs over the brink, and then fell back.

There were now two horses struggling in the brook; while Firefly, having regained her feet, galloped away in terror. Jasper struggled out of the mud and dust uninjured, as did Balthazar's jockey.

Strange to say, Jasper, instead of hastening to the assistance of his brother, who had twice endeavoured in vain to rise, caught the black horse by the bridle, and while the jockey encouraged him, endeavoured to get him out of the brook.

People were now running from all directions to the scene of the accident. Bob Flinders, the whipper-in, was quickly by the side of Walter, and after ascertaining that he was not fatally injured, looked around for the mare.

Firefly was cantering round and round the field, seemingly determined to elude all those who tried to catch her.

"Get up, sir! Get up, Master Walter! We'll win yet, if you can mount!"

He assisted his young master to rise, who, stunned and dizzy, was forced to lean on his shoulder for support, and then looked around for Firefly.

"Pull yourself together, Master Walter; we'll win yet, though there's them as wouldn't mind murder to stop it! I see it all; and it's a downright scandalous affair! Where's Firefly? Ah! there she goes, the beauty, a'most scared out o' her life."

Then he whistled a peculiar whistle, at the sound of which Firefly stopped dead, pricked up her ears, and then came trotting up as quiet as a spaniel.

"Ah! my little beauty, they thought to rob you of winning, did they? But they shan't! Come, Master Walter, get in the saddle: I'll help you up. Quick! there's no time to lose. The black's a strugglin' out o' the ditch."

Walter with great difficulty was hoisted into the saddle. But he was dizzy, could scarcely see, and had to hold on with both hands to keep his seat. Blood was streaming down his face from a cut on the forehead, where he had struck against a stone. Almost at the same time Balthazar, by the united exertions of Jasper and the jockey, scrambled out. But his temper was now up, and he plunged and reared so violently that it was impossible to mount him.

"Hold on, Master Walter! Now for it! Keep her head straight, and canter her in."

"I can't see," Walter said, faintly.

"Then she'll follow me; only you hold on, that's all."

With these words the whipper-in started off at a run, calling to his beloved Firefly, who trotted after him neighing.

Walter was forced to bend over the saddle and hold on to her mane. He had received a terrible shock, and with the greatest difficulty kept his seat.

"Hold on, sir!—hold on! We win! Firefly, Firefly! Come along, my beauty!"

And running along, the mare followed him up the course, past the carriages, up to the stand; and amidst tremendous plaudits, Firefly passed the judge's chair in a quiet canter, and was proclaimed the winner.

A second or two afterwards Balthazar, whose jockey had not been injured, thundered along the course, and had the barren honour of being placed second.

The feelings of Julia Tollemache, Lord John, and Jasper, were of the bitterest.

Jasper had failed in his treacherous attempt, and after nearly killing his brother, had the mortification of seeing the chesnut mare win by two seconds only.

So soon as the post was passed, John Lawrence rushed through the crowd, and receiving Walter half-fainting in his arms, carried him into the stewards' room in the stand.

There was another, too, who insisted on following; and when, after a draught of wine and a dash of cold water in his face, Walter recovered from his swoon, he saw the sweet face of Florence Legrey bending over him.

"Walter, dear Walter, you are not much hurt? My love, my own Walter! you have done gloriously. You know I love you—so be happy."

And he was happy. None but himself heard the words. They sank deep in his heart, and he thought to himself, as his strength slowly recovered, that her pardon and freely-confessed love was reward enough for a trifling accident.

Villany frequently defeats itself, and brings ruin and disgrace upon those who attempt to practise it. But seldom is a piece of treachery so utterly defeated and punished as it was on the present occasion. Walter was not killed; but Jasper nevertheless had to bear all the odium of his wicked attempt, for the truth somehow or another got bruited abroad. Baffled and disgraced, he was for a long time sent to Coventry by all his friends and acquaintances; and while Walter's suit prospered with the fair Florence, even to maturity, he had the bitter mortification of witnessing that which he had so deeply sinned to prevent—the marriage of Lady Julia with the Marquis.

If this tale does not prove that “honesty is the best policy,” it at least serves to back another saying, “cheating never prospers;” for assuredly an attempted and cruel cheat is but seldom so utterly frustrated. Walter Lawrence, happy in the love of Florence, freely forgave his brother; but though he never alluded to the subject, he often thought of that most eventful steeple-chase.

V.

THE MAN WHO NEVER SMILED



IN the year 1860, there might be seen in Naples a man whose gloomy, stern countenance excited universal remark. He was a tall, gaunt Italian, whose long, cadaverous features and hollow cheeks were rendered yet more sepulchral by a black beard, and large dark eyes deeply set in their orbits.

He frequented the various cafés and saloons, but was seldom seen to converse with anyone, and never seen to smile, hence he obtained the soubriquet of *L'uomo che 'mai sorrise*—"The man who never smiles."

It was currently believed that there was some terrible story connected with him. Some said that he had suffered a grievous wrong; others, that he had committed a great crime. All agreed that he had been concerned in some terrible tragedy, which had cast a gloom over his life, and caused him to be thus morose and saturnine, so as to have earned the title of "The man who never smiled."

He was an Italian, named Brutus Policastro, and had fought valiantly for his country under the great patriot Garibaldi, both at Rome in 1848, and also in the campaign which ended in the kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies being handed over to Victor Immanuel, king of Italy.

On one occasion, and one only, he had related his history—the story of the terrible tragedy which had for ever banished the smile from his lips, and filled his heart with inextinguishable hatred for the Bourbons.

It was around the watch-fire before beleaguered Capua that "the man who never smiled" told his sad story to two comrades in arms.

A feeling possessed him that he would not die happy were he to fall in the battle which was imminent without first unburdening his mind, and telling the history of the terrible wrongs he had suffered, and the as terrible vengeance he had taken.

Thus ran his tale, which he related pacing to and fro before the watch-fire:—

"I have been called *L'uomo che 'mai sorrise*, and I do not object to the title.

"I have good reason for never smiling, also for my eternal and inextinguishable hatred to the accursed Bourbons.

"Once I had a father; he was murdered—a poor, helpless gray-haired old man.

"I had a brother—a lad, a boy—whom we all loved. He, too, was slaughtered by these wretches.

"I had a sister. The fatal gift of beauty which fortune had bestowed on her was her ruin. A Bourbon officer, son of the governor of Palermo, cast his eyes on her, and by fraud and violence carried her off.

"Ah! of that I will speak last of all."

Then Policastro, as if overcome by emotion at the memories the mention of his sister brought up, paced up and down for some time in silence.

"I am by birth a Tuscan," he said, presently; "but after the siege of Rome, in 1849, and the defeat by overwhelming numbers of the national heroes—chief among them Garibaldi—I had to leave my native country.

"We went to Sicily, where my father, Giuseppe Policastro, had a small property.

"I, my sister, my father, and my young brother, a lad of fifteen—that was our family at the time. But to begin at the beginning, that is to say, at the period when the eventful portion of my life commenced:—

"I, Brutus Policastro, with many other patriots, entered Rome on the 24th of May, 1849. Garibaldi was at our head, and we were hailed by an immense crowd with cries of wild joy. As to that glorious defence of Rome, history will award the defenders all honour.

"We fought till farther fighting seemed impossible; and yet we

fought on, and only ceased fighting when an important position was gained by the enemy through treachery.

"I will tell you how it happened. I was lieutenant of the second company of the Bersaglieri, and we were close to the French parallel. The duty was horribly dangerous. It was only performed at night, and a little before day all the men were withdrawn, except the sentries and the advanced posts.

"In the middle of the night a few shots were heard; then again all was silence.

"What had happened?

"Simply this: the French had presented themselves all at once before the trench—not like an enemy mounting to the assault, but like soldiers relieving guard.

"We were betrayed.

"Bastions 5, 6, and 7 fell into the hands of the enemy, after a fierce but useless resistance.

"But we fought on still, although we had lost three important posts.

"Shortly after this, Garibaldi said to a deputation of citizens and patriots as follows:—

"‘All defence is henceforth impossible, unless we are resolved to make of Rome another Saragossa.’

"This was the end of the Roman republic.

"When Garibaldi said that it was impossible to fight longer, it was evident all was over.

"Immediately the Assembly issued the following decree:—

“‘THE ROMAN REPUBLIC.

“‘In the name of God and the people.

"‘The Roman Constituent Assembly discontinues a defence which has become impossible.

"‘The Triumvirate are charged with the execution of the present decree.’

"And so fell Rome in 1849, through the accursed bastard, usurper, and perjurer, who now reigns in France."

"Amen to your words," said a comrade; "confusion to Napoleon III., as he calls himself."

"But I tell you," Policastro went on, "we had some hard fighting. At one time, we were shut up in the Villa Spada, where we kept on the enemy a fearful fire of musketry. We were getting short of ammunition, when Garibaldi made his appearance with a

column of legionaries and some soldiers of the line. Determined to strike a last blow, not for safety, but for the honour of Rome, we rushed to the breach, striking with the lance, sword, and bayonet. We had no ammunition—neither powder nor ball. The French, astonished at this desperate assault, fell back at first. Fresh troops, however, came up. At the same time, their artillery, which had opened fire, began to play havoc in our ranks, carrying away whole files at once. The Aurelian enclosure was taken and retaken; there was not room to place a foot without treading on the wounded and the dead. Garibaldi that night was greater than ever. His sword was like lightning. Every man he struck fell dead or desperately wounded. The blood of a new adversary washed off the blood of him who had just fallen. He was like Leonidas at Thermopylæ. Every moment it seemed certain he must fall. But bullets seemed to glance off him; he remained firm, immovable as destiny.

“Then there came retreat.

“A few of us succeeded in cutting our way through the French and Austrian hirelings; and I, for one, escaped to Sicily, where I took possession of the little property my father possessed in his name.

“Now comes the first act in the tragedy which has caused me to swear a solemn vow never to spare a ‘Bourbon wretch.’ I am about to relate the beginning of that series of cruelties, atrocities, and murders which have caused me to bear the name of *L’uomo che ’mai sorrise*.

“My father, an old man, who had never interfered in any way in politics, was seized by the Papal troops, torn from his farm, and, without accusation or trial, *shot!*

“That is the first part.

“Such, doubtless, would have been the fate of all of us, had we not escaped.

“As I before said, we possessed a small property in Sicily, and thither we met again, such of our family as escaped the vengeance of the enemy.

“For a time I hoped—we all hoped—that we had found an asylum from the vindictiveness of our foes, and I was even foolish enough to think that I could remain here peaceably on our little farm, tending goats and growing grapes, until the time should again come to fight the enemies of God, freedom, and my country.

“But I was mistaken. I had forgotten that Sicily was under

the rule of the Bourbons, cruel and cowardly, always ready to take part with the strong against the weak.

"Our little farm, or rather, large garden, was situated on the western shore of the famous Bay of Palermo, near the point called the Conca d'Oro—the Golden Shell.

"One day, when I was in the city selling some of our produce in the market, I was seen and recognised by a Neapolitan officer.

"Then again began our trials and persecutions.

"I had a sister, a beautiful young girl of eighteen.

"A few days after this occurrence a government official and a file of soldiers came. Bianca was at home—alone. They questioned and greatly frightened the poor girl, and then proceeded to ransack the house.

"Fortunately, nothing was found to criminate any of us. And yet I can scarcely say fortunately, for from that time we were marked as *suspected*, and were constantly subjected to visits from government officials and brutal soldiers.

"On several occasions an officer in command of the latter had paid marked attention to, or rather, cursed with his insulting admiration and fine speeches, our dear Bianca. But, warned by the past, and conscious that to resist them would be but to beat my head against a rock, I counselled and practised patience.

"One day, however, I was out, leaving Bianca and my young brother at home. On my return, a terrible scene presented itself to me.

"I had heard the sound of shouts and shots, and quickened my pace, wondering what could be the cause of the commotion on our quiet little farm.

"So soon as I got close enough, I saw a crowd of soldiers swaying to and fro, evidently struggling around some object. Another party were clustered together in another place, and I could make out that one was kneeling by the side of a man who appeared to be wounded. Yet another group I discerned, and amidst these last my poor sister Bianca.

"On seeing me, she shrieked for aid. I flew on the wretches, and seizing a musket from one, scattered them right and left, and then raised up my sister, who had fallen to the ground.

"An instant afterwards, however, I was again surrounded and attacked. I resisted desperately, nerved by the shrieks of Bianca. But I was overpowered, and in a few minutes lay bruised and bleeding, a prisoner in the hands of the brutal soldiery. My

brother, too, was also bound and wounded, and Bianca they also retained in custody.

"I did not at the time know what had occurred, but learned afterwards. I may as well tell you here.

"I have before spoken of a Neapolitan officer who had cast his basilisk glance on Bianca. I suspected that she was partly the attraction which caused these frequent visits, knowing well, as the government officials must have done, that whatever I might have been formerly, at that time I was leading a quiet, industrious life, and quite innocent of all plots. Suspecting, then, from the man's manner, that Bianca was his object, I kept strict watch and ward over her—as did her betrothed, a friend of mine, a young Sicilian, Cesaro Colonna by name. For a time I succeeded in keeping the wolf at bay.

"But at last the evil day came. During the absence of myself and the temporary absence of my young brother, this villain arrived with a company of his soldiers, and entering the house with the supposed purpose of seeking for treasonable documents or arms, he found there my poor Bianca—alone!

"I need not dwell upon his conduct; suffice it to say, that he grossly and brutally insulted her.

"Her shrieks called my young brother to her assistance.

"Though a mere youth, he burst through them, and, armed with a pruning-hook, attacked the officer.

"So furious was his assault, that though the other drew his sword and tried to beat him off, my brother closed with him and inflicted several wounds before the soldiers could come to the assistance of their officer.

"They seized my poor brother and bound him, after a desperate resistance, while others laid hands on Bianca.

"It was at this moment that I arrived on the scene, only to swell the list of prisoners.

"The wounded officer—the Captain Alfonso Baracco he was called—presently recovered sufficiently to give orders. May his soul and memory be for ever accursed!

"His first order was to shoot my brother, then and there, without trial of any sort.

"They dragged him into the back yard, poor boy, and caused him to stand up against the wall. He was a brave lad. Ah! great Heaven! I think I see him now, standing with his hands bound behind him, bleeding, pale, but dauntless to the last. Then

a file of soldiers was told off. I heard the fatal word of command, followed instantly by the report of a dozen muskets, and, behold, my brother was a corpse! This officer, this detestable murderer and attempted ravisher, was the son of the Governor of Palermo, a member of the cowardly Neapolitan aristocracy. This fact will go to explain what followed.

"As a matter of course, we were both of us thrown into prison. My feelings may be imagined by either of you gentlemen. My poor brother murdered before my eyes—my sister in the power of these wretches. I begged that my sister might be imprisoned with me, or near me, until our trial. Trial! fool that I was to dream of such a thing! I was destined to imprisonment without sentence; the term—so long as my vindictive foes might choose to keep me there.

"Bianca was destined for a more dishonourable fate. The villain Baracco intended her for his mistress.

"At first he tried persuasion with her, and she was placed in luxurious apartments, with everything she could require at her command, except her liberty. Need I say that she repelled with scorn and hatred the overtures of her brother's murderer?

"I have before spoken of her betrothed, Cesaro Colonna. He, like a true lover and faithful friend, found out where she was imprisoned, and swore solemnly to liberate her or perish.

"His mother and his friends were much richer than us, and by the sale of property he procured a considerable sum of money.

"This he devoted to compassing the escape of Bianca. He also continued to communicate with me, by bribing the gaoler. All these people are to be bribed; cowardly and treacherous, they are not even faithful to their villanous employers.

"Well, to make my story short, this brave fellow succeeded in procuring my sister's escape, and contrived that she should be rapidly and secretly conveyed to a safe place in the mountains.

"But, unfortunately, he was not able to remove all trace of his own complicity, nor was he able to escape himself, for the very next day to that on which Bianca was, through him, liberated, he was cast into prison; not before, however, he had contrived to send me a letter, telling me of his success, and of the place of concealment whither Bianca had been sent.

"Scarcely had I received this—a brief missive—than Alphonso Baracco himself came into my cell, followed by the gaoler, pale and trembling. It seems that the fact of my having received a

letter from my friend had become known to him, and he had hastened thither to possess himself of it. Fortunately, I divined the object of his visit. It is a way with me never to lose my prudence and sense even under the most trying circumstances.

"What could I do with the letter? That was the question.

"I could not burn it, for there was no fire.

"I could not throw it away, for the window was barred, and far above my reach.

"If I tore it up into ever so small pieces the time allowed of, they could be placed together again. This I well knew.

"How, then, was I to destroy it?

"I will tell you. I rolled it up tight, like a bolus, and swallowed it, the instant I saw my enemy at the door.

"The cell was very dark and gloomy, so that he did not perceive what I had done.

"Then I took a drink of water, and politely asked him his business.

"He told me he came for a letter I had just received.

"I replied that I knew nothing of it—that he could search if he chose.

"They did so; and then, when I felt certain the letter was reduced to a pulp in my stomach by the powers of digestion, I triumphantly told him what I had done.

"Frantic was his rage; he cursed, swore, and blasphemed.

"I replied by taunts and defiance; then he struck me with the pommel of his sword, and I flew upon him like a tiger.

"They did not separate us until I had nearly choked him, dashed his head against the stones, and bitten one of his fingers off. My teeth and hands were my only weapons.

"Ah! but I can understand since then how tigers should enjoy blood. No dish I have ever partaken of was so sweet as the taste of my enemy's blood. By all the saints! I could have sucked his coward body dry!

"After this they put me to the torture. For one thing, they fastened my hands behind my back, and then suspended me by my wrists. You may perhaps imagine my agony, comrades.

"But I did not yield.

"I will not go so far as to say that not a groan escaped me; that was impossible. But I can say that, though I several times fainted, I did not reveal the contents of the letter; so the cowardly wretch got no clue from me to guide him to Bianca.

"Alas! all my agony was in vain.

"Cesaro Colonna they also put to the torture. He too, brave heart, refused to speak.

"His agonies were terrible, but they failed to gain their point.

"As for me, my condition was wretched indeed. They took away a few books a kind priest, who was permitted sometimes to see the prisoners, had given me. They placed irons on my feet, and put me into another dungeon, more horrible and loathsome than the first. This last cell was below the level of the earth many feet, the walls slimy with damp. This dungeon adjoined that of my poor friend, Cesaro Colonna. Through some ill-stopped chinks in the brickwork which formed the partition wall, I could see him and hear his groans. He was lying upon a miserable bench, in great agony from the effects of the torture, while two guards stood beside him to listen, in case in the delirium of pain and weakness he should divulge the secret of Bianca's retreat. An awful silence prevailed, broken only by the faint moans of the poor maimed and crushed prisoner.

"One day they led him out to death; they took him by the longest road, past the house of his mother and relations, hoping that the sight of these dear ones, who were compelled to appear at the windows, would shake his resolution.

"But all was unavailing. They took him to the place of execution, and made all preparations; but even at the last moment he never quailed. They brought him back, and it was with feelings of triumph and admiration I heard him say, in a low voice—

"'Ah! they have forgotten one thing, these foolish wretches, that there is something in the world which I love better than mother, brother, sisters—Bianca and my honour!'

"Every means were taken to subdue his spirit, and I was compelled to witness it all. I dared not even speak to him, for they told me that if I did so, he should be again put to the torture. As for me, though they had threatened to tear me limb from limb, and I knew they would keep their word, I would have spoken, and tried to console him in his misery, but I could not bear the thought of bringing fresh agony upon him. Everything was tried—want of food, want of sleep, want of water,—but he remained firm.

"At last, feeling that he was growing weaker, and at times delirious, he feared lest in his raving moments he should betray the place of retreat of Bianca. Stealthily, and with desperate resolve, he sharpened a nail, and with this opened the carotid artery of his

throat. In his last throes he wrote on the wall these words:—
'I leave, by this my last testament, my vengeance to Italy!'

"Thus died my poor friend, Cesaro Colonna. As to his legacy of vengeance, I have done my best to fulfil his wishes.

"My friends," continued Policastro, after a brief pause, which the emotion excited by the memory of his friend rendered necessary, "it is very sad to think that all this devotion was in vain.

"They found out the retreat of my poor Bianca, my darling little sister, now an angel in heaven. You will understand that this villain, Capitano Baracco, being the son of the governor, was, for the time, above the laws of God and man, and could do absolutely as he pleased. His father backed him in his wickedness, and the accursed Bourbon government of Italy backed the governor of Palermo. So that he kept down insurrections, and caused to be shot as many patriots as possible, the king cared not what other crimes he committed.

"I now come to the final atrocity—an atrocity, my friends, which the blood of all the Bourbon minions in Italy can never expiate.

"Baracco hated me most desperately, and resolved equally on my death and the dishonour of my sister. By a singular chance, however, the fact of my captivity became known to an old friend of mine, who, though also a patriot, had received an amnesty, and was even in favour at the court of Rome. He had chanced to render a great service to one of the cardinals, who had influence with the Pope; the Pope, in turn, influenced the King of Naples, who sent an order for my release.

"Nothing was said of Bianca.

"Great was the fury of Baracco when he learned this; but the governor dared not disobey. Nevertheless, this fiend in human form conceived and carried out the most horrible piece of cruelty in the world. Listen well now, while I relate it, and say whether there is not abundant reason for my being known as *L'uomo che 'mai sorrise.*"

"They were forced to liberate me, but they might with impunity commit any other atrocity they chose—and they knew it. One day the head gaoler—a creature of this eternally-to-be-cursed villain, Baracco—asked me if I had ever heard of William Tell and his celebrated feat of shooting the apple from his son's head.

"Of course I replied that I had. Then he laughed gruffly, and told me—the coarse, burly scoundrel—that he had heard I was a good shot with the rifle.

"I replied that I was.

"Then he went on to ask me whether, under the same circumstances, I could do likewise—that is to say, hit as small a mark.

"I said I had no wish to try.

"‘Then,’ said he, ‘suppose you could gain your liberty by doing so, would you attempt it?’

"‘And what if I failed?’ I asked.

"‘Well,’ he replied, shrugging his shoulders, ‘you would be no worse off.’

"He left me after this, and for a day or two I heard no more of it.

"I wondered greatly what it meant, but could not fathom it at all.

"Again he broached the subject, and I said, angrily—

"‘What is the use of making a fool of a poor devil? If I were to succeed in doing what you propose, it would doubtless amuse you; but you would not release me.’

"Now mind you, my friends, I cared not for life, but I wished to be free for *vengeance*.

"Ultimately, he made the following proposal to me—

"That if I could succeed in hitting an object the size of a large orange at fifty yards, I should go free, and an order to that effect, signed by the governor of Palermo himself, should be placed in my hands.

"I reflected. If I failed, I should be no worse off; while it was possible, even probable, that I might obtain my freedom if I were successful.

"I could not imagine what object they could have. No one, my friends, could ever conceive that any human beings could be guilty of such an atrocity as that which these villains planned and carried out.

"After some consideration, I accepted the ordeal; not without a lurking idea, if I saw anything which boded treachery, to send my bullet elsewhere than at the appointed object.

"In due course I was conducted (still manacled hand and foot) into a long corridor of the prison. At the end of this I saw a large screen, with the picture of a woman thereon—a saint, as I supposed, by the costume and the *nimbus* around her head.

"Immediately over the forehead of this painting there was a white circle, and I was told that was the object which I was required to strike with my bullet.

"The other end of this passage was well lighted, by means of numerous wax tapers.

"About ten feet from the picture there ran across another passage at right angles.

"All being in readiness, the manacles were taken from my hands, and the gaoler approached with a rifle.

"I requested to be allowed to load myself.

"This was permitted; but I was surrounded on three sides by a semicircle of soldiers, with bayonets pointed.

"Evidently there was a fear lest I should do as William Tell intended to have done had he killed his son—that is to say, attempt to take the life of one of my tyrants.

"As I have said, I had behind me and on either hand a semicircle of steel.

"Hearing the voice of my hated foe, Baracco, I looked behind me, and perceived him standing with a malignant smile on his features—as I thought, a smile of triumph.

"That smile should have caused me to pause and consider the meaning of all this.

"But for once my prudence and caution deserted me.

"Nor could I indeed be blamed. It seemed that I could not possibly be worse off. If I failed, they could only kill me and torture me, and that they had at any time the power to do; whereas, by success it was possible I might pass out free, and devote my life to vengeance.

"With these thoughts I took the rifle, loaded it, and prepared to aim at the white circle just above the forehead of the picture.

"Before doing so I glanced over my shoulder at Baracco, who stood a little to my left, and raised slightly above the soldiers who surrounded me.

"The expression of his face was that of fiendish delight.

"I was on my knees, and felt half inclined to rise and refuse the ordeal—such was the effect of that villain's look on me.

"Would to Heaven I had done so!

"But the rifle was in my hands.

"I was nearly sure I could hit the mark, and—Heaven forgive me!—I anticipated with pleasure the petty triumph of proving to these wretches that neither torture nor imprisonment could dim my eyes, cause my heart to quail, or render my hand unsteady.

"So, still on one knee, I took deliberate aim, pointing the rifle first at the breast of the picture, then slowly elevating it to the

face, till it reached the lower edge of the white disk above the forehead—then I fired.

“I knew instantly that my shot was a good and true one—even before I saw the hole nearly in the centre of the white circle.

“I rose to my feet with a feeling of triumph.

“‘Ha! ha! ha! Well aimed, my friend—a capital shot!’

“There was nothing in the words, but the tone in which Baracco laughed and said this caused my blood to run cold.

“I turned and looked at him.

“His face was full of diabolical glee and triumph—his eyes blazed like live coals.

“‘Ha! ha!’ he shouted rather than laughed, ‘I am avenged now for the loss of my finger. Place irons on the hands of the prisoner.’

“‘Irons?’ I said, turning to the head gaoler; ‘I was promised my liberty if I succeeded in striking the mark, and I have done so.’

“‘Obey your orders!’ shouted my enemy.

“And in a minute I was again ironed.

“‘My friend,’ said Baracco, with terrible irony, ‘you will have your liberty. A Baracco never breaks his word. I promised you should be set free, and also that I would have a terrible vengeance on you. Lead forward the prisoner, and let him behold his handiwork.’

“They led me down the passage towards the picture, in a state resembling stupefaction.

“What could all this mean? How had he obtained a terrible revenge on me?

“His next words, and what followed, revealed the horrible truth.

“‘I said I would be revenged on you, my friend, for the loss of my finger, which you, like a rat of the kennel, gnawed off.’

“‘I would I had the opportunity of gnawing your heart out!’ I muttered.

“He went on, ‘Already I have been revenged on you through your sister. I have had my will of her.’

“I started towards him, gnashing my teeth with rage, and with my manacled hands endeavoured to seize him by the throat. But I was instantly grasped by several soldiers and dragged back.

“‘Ha, ha, ha!’ he laughed, ‘I have not done yet—that is but the beginning. It was I arranged this charming little drama of the picture and the white circle at which you were to aim. You will be set free—but not in Sicily. You will be conveyed in

a vessel to Calabria, and there put ashore. Should you ever be found on Sicilian soil again, you will instantly be arrested and hanged. Before you go, Signor Policastro, I wish you to be aware of the full extent of my vengeance. Lead him forward," he cried to the soldiers who held me, "close to the picture, within a yard of it."

"They did so, and I stood for a moment wondering and trembling, not with terror, but with a certain vague apprehension of coming evil.

"For a few moments there was a deep and solemn silence.

"Baracco all the while glared on me like an evil spirit.

"Even the soldiers felt that some terrible event was about to happen, as I could tell by their looks and manner.

"*Remove the picture*" cried Baracco in a loud voice, which sounded to me as though it came from the jaws of hell.

"Then two of the goaler's assistants stepped forward, and taking the picture, moved it on one side.

"Great Heaven! what a sight met my view! Would that the sight had killed me then and there! Yet, no—then I should not have been avenged.

"Before me, exactly behind the figure of the saint in the picture, I beheld the form of a woman.

"A young woman, with dark hair flowing over her white dress.

"A woman bound and gagged by means of a piece of wood in her mouth and fastened behind the head.

"A woman with a blue mark in the forehead—a bullet-hole—from which the blood still bubbled and oozed, trickling in a crimson stream over her face.

"A woman—no other than my sister Bianca, whom my bullet had slain!

"At once I realised the whole diabolical plot.

"He had caused her to be placed and bound in such a position that her forehead was exactly behind the white circle at which I was to take aim.

"With fatal precision I had sent the leaden messenger of death through the object, and, of a consequence, also through the brain of my poor Bianca.

"My heart stood still as I gazed on this ghastly—this horrible sight. I turned deadly pale, sick, and faint. I staggered back and was nearly swooning.

"But the devilish eyes of Baracco, gleaming in horrid triumph on me, called back my courage, awoke anew my hatred, and caused

to arise within me a fierce thirst for vengeance, such as, I believe, no man has before or since felt.

"As I walked out between the soldiers, pale and horrified at the terrible spectacle I had just witnessed, I cast one long glance on his face.

"The coward quailed before me, and as I went out from the prison I looked up to heaven, and swore a terrible vow to devote my whole life to vengeance.

"The most gallant Captain Baracco kept his word as regarded my being set at liberty after being landed on the coast of Calabria, for two reasons; one that he feared my vengeance, the other that he dared not disobey the order which had been received for my liberation.

"I was taken on board a small vessel, guarded by soldiers, and still handcuffed, and, as I said, I was landed on the Calabrian coast, penniless, half-starved, and weak.

"But these things did not daunt me. I was free, and saw in the future revenge on my enemy and all the accursed brood of Bourbons and their adherents.

"Within a month I was again in Palermo. Aye, I would have been there though I had to swim across the straits from Calabria to Sicily.

"I waited and watched for days and weeks for my opportunity, taking great precautions against being discovered.

"At last I marked my man down to a spot which I thought suitable for carrying into effect my righteous purpose of killing this wretch. I found out that twice a week, and sometimes oftener, he was in the habit of going to bathe in a secluded creek on the other side of the point called the Conca d'Oro.

"Here there was a beautiful shelving sandy beach, on which the blue waves rippled delightfully.

"I followed him—my hated enemy, watched him undress, and, leaving his clothes on the shore, plunge into the sea and swim out.

"I undressed also, and taking a small sheath knife in my teeth, plunged into the water a few minutes after him.

"I was a powerful swimmer, so also was he. But I was nerved by a sense of a terrible crime and the desire of vengeance.

"At first he did not perceive me. I swam steadily after him, keeping the haft of the knife between my teeth—that knife which I hoped would shortly be wet with his heart's blood.

"Slowly I gained upon him, and when within about twenty

yards, shouted his name. He stopped swimming, and turned in surprise.

"Seeing only my face, and that only occasionally, by reason of the rippling waves, he did not recognise me.

"So, without any alarm in his voice, he cried—

"'Who are you?'

"'Who am I?—ah! you will soon see,' I replied.

"And with that I struck out more vigorously, and approached within a few yards of him.

"I felt sure of my vengeance, so could afford to terrify him, to treat him like a cat does a mouse.

"'I am Policastro, the avenger.' I cried.

"Then there broke from his lips a yell of terror.

"He saw and recognised me, nor could he fail also to perceive the knife I held between my teeth. He turned and swam with all his strength.

"Never did I see a man cleave the water with such desperation as did he for a minute or so. But I took no notice, and swam quietly on.

"In a short time my long, steady stroke brought me again within a few yards of him. I was swimming quietly, so that he did not hear me, and perhaps thought he was distancing me in this race for life or death.

"When quite close, I cried out—

"'Alfonso Baracco, are you prepared for death?'

"Again a shriek of agony and terror broke from him, and again he tore through the water with the strength which terror gave to him, and went far ahead of me.

"I kept steadily on, and slowly but surely gained on him.

"We were now more than a mile out at sea, and if he went on, it seemed as though we were likely to be both drowned.

"That, however, had no terror for me.

"I knew that I could overtake him in a few minutes, and so that I was revenged, I cared not for my own life.

"Soon I saw him look behind him. The sight of his terror-stricken face and wildly-staring eyes was sweet to me indeed, as evidences of the agony of fear he felt.

"Then he made a quarter-turn, and commenced swimming to a point of land, or rather a sandbank, which ran out into the little bay. It was distant about three-quarters of a mile, but certainly much nearer than the shore from whence he had started.

"Seeing this, I exerted myself and swam faster, so much so that I was enabled—inch by inch, yard by yard—to gain on him, pass him, and presently to head him back from the shore he hoped to gain before me, the avenger.

"Again I saw his pale, horrified face turned towards me when he perceived his retreat was intercepted. Then he turned, and with a fresh burst of desperate exertion, struck out for the shore he had left.

"I followed at my leisure, gaining on him slowly and surely. I might have come up with him quicker, but I chose to prolong his agony.

"Nearer, nearer I drew, keeping right in his wake.

"Thirty yards—twenty yards—ten yards!

"I could hear his gasping, laborious breathing.

"He was evidently growing weaker, and I, who did not exert myself at all, had to slacken speed to avoid overtaking him all at once, which was not my object.

"We were now about half a mile from the shore, and he was utterly at my mercy. By half-a-dozen vigorous strokes I could have caught him up, and then with one blow I could have taken his life by plunging my knife in his body.

"But such was neither my wish nor my intention.

"‘Captain Baracco,’ I said, ‘you did not think to see me, did you?’

"He made no answer, but turned towards me his pale, cadaverous face—the face of a corpse, the colour between white and blue.

"Again he strained every nerve, and splashed away through the water.

"Poor fool! Seeing that he increased his distance from me, and that each moment he got nearer the shore, he fancied he saw a chance of escape.

"I quickly undeceived him.

"In two minutes I was close to him—abreast of him—and then, taking my knife from between my teeth, with my right hand I held it above the water, and keeping level with him, drew his attention to it.

"‘Captain Baracco, what do you think of this short steel blade? You will feel it presently in your body.’

"The sight of the gleaming knife caused a fresh paroxysm of terror to the wretch.

"Once more he endeavoured to increase his pace, swimming

desperately, and splashing like a *spada* [sword-fish of the Mediterranean] wounded and pursued by the fisherman.

"We were now less than a quarter of a mile from the beach, and I judged it time to commence active business.

"In half a minute I was again close behind the murderer. He was all but exhausted, and I could swim with ease three yards to his one. So, with a couple of swift strokes, I got within reach of him, and drawing the knife from between my teeth, I stuck it sharply into his back.

"Not too hard, only about an inch or two. I did not intend he should die so easily—the murderous scoundrel!

"Oh, gentlemen, never shall I forget the exquisite pleasure I experienced as I felt it enter his flesh, nor the greedy joy with which I observed the blood follow the stab, staining the sea in his wake.

"He shrieked aloud with pain and terror; but this time the effort he made to escape me was a very feeble one.

"I now fell back a little, and enjoyed the sweet delight of swimming behind him in water crimsoned with his blood.

"After a lapse of a minute or so, I again drew up to him, and once more stabbed him with my knife.

"Again a piercing shriek of agony, this time followed by prayers for mercy.

"I had again placed the knife between my teeth after inflicting the second stab (which was in his leg, as I did not wish to kill him too soon).

"'Mercy—mercy! Pardon—spare me!' he cried.

"I could not laugh, for the knife I held in my mouth prevented me, but I grinned and snarled like a dog with savage joy.

"Now we were within a hundred yards of the beach.

"'Mercy!' I said, taking the knife in my right hand, 'yes, coward wretch, and eternally-to-be-damned scoundrel and murderer! such mercy as you showed to my poor brother—the mercy you showed to my friend Cesaro Colonna—the mercy you showed to my sister Bianca!'

"We were now close to the shore, and as I did not think it was yet time to allow him to touch the land, I drew up alongside of him, and, as I passed ahead, by a rapid stroke drove the knife through his left arm.

"'That is for my friend Cesaro Colonna,' I said.

"Thereupon I turned quickly in the water, and faced him.

"Weak and almost dead with terror as he was, he still had sufficient strength to turn in order to avoid me. This suited me admirably.

"I followed him at my leisure, and again swimming abreast of him, plunged my knife through his right arm, saying—

"‘This is for my murdered brother, Capitano Alfonso Baracco.’

"The blade of the knife stuck into the bone, and I had some difficulty in drawing it out.

"He now commenced shrieking continuously, with the hope, I fancy, of attracting attention from the shore.

"I thought it time to bring this affair to a termination. To tell the truth, I was getting rather impatient, as might a tiger be to devour the carcase of his quivering prey—a child to eat the whole of a sweetmeat it had tasted.

"So I again swam up to him, and paying no attention to his yells and screams, I drove my knife through his leg, the one which as yet was unwounded.

"He was too much exhausted now by loss of blood and terror, and the desperate exertion he had made, to do anything more except scream out with pain—a hoarse, gurgling scream it was—most discordant and horrible, I doubt not, to most people’s ears, but to mine heavenly music. He could now scarcely swim at all. I passed round and round him, and noticed his eyes were getting dim, his face of a more deadly leaden colour, while occasionally his frame was shaken as by some convulsion.

"Thought I to myself, I must permit him to land now, or he will faint and sink, and so baulk me of my vengeance. So I fell back, and allowed him to struggle on towards the shore. He was so weak and benumbed with pain and terror, that when his feet struck the bottom he could not walk, but half staggered, half swam to the beach. I let him crawl up, and then at my leisure followed him. He rose to his feet, weak and tottering, a horrid object to behold.

"I could have pitied him, but I saw before me the image of my sister Bianca—bound, gagged, and with the blood streaming down her face—killed by her brother, murdered by him.

"That sad vision banished every spark of pity, and again the fire of hate and vengeance burned more fiercely within my breast as I remembered the dreadful tragedy.

"His body was blue from terror, and from the wounds my knife had inflicted there ran streams of blood.

"He staggered forward a few paces, then fell.

"I shouted to him.

"'Ha! scoundrel—you are weak in body, it seems, as you are cowardly in heart,' I cried; 'run—run for your life, if you have any strength in your wretched limbs.'

"The miserable devil turned his face towards me, and gave me a look of such unutterable horror and misery, that again I almost felt as if I must relent.

"But then there arose another vision by the side of that of my murdered sister; the vision of a youth—a stripling of seventeen, standing with pinioned arms, his breast stained with blood where the fatal bullets had entered. Then every shade of pity took flight, and I was Policastro the avenger.

"After this look—helpless, abject, despairing—he turned and ran.

"Feebly, with tottering steps, the blood which poured from his wounds marking his track on the sand.

"I watched him with triumph and fury. He was mine—he could not escape. I had the power now to avenge my brother, friend, and sister, murdered by that man.

"I saw them all three now, and thought they smiled on me.

"Then with a savage howl I started and ran after him—caught him, ere he had gone on twenty yards, and hurled him to the earth, where he lay gasping and panting for breath. I kneeled beside him and sharpened my knife on a stone which was close by.

"'Now, my friend Baracco,' I said, with as much calmness as I could command, 'I am going to kill you; have you anything to say?'

"'Mercy! mercy!—for the love of Heaven, spare me!'

"His voice was hoarse, and I fancied I could hear the death-rattle in his throat. This alarmed me. It was necessary that I should kill him absolutely, and not let him die an easy death through loss of blood.

"So, holding the knife in my right hand, I with the other counted his ribs on the left side, and selected a place between the third and fourth.

"Here I placed the point of the knife, and taking the stone, commenced hammering it in—gently at first, as you would a nail into the wall.

"He struggled desperately; so after my blade had entered an inch or so, I seized him by the throat with my left hand.

"Then with my right I struck the haft of the knife again and again, saying as I did so—

" 'This for my murdered friend !'

" 'This for my murdered brother !'

" 'This for myself !'

" And lastly—

" '*This for my sister Bianca !*'

" With these words, with a desperate blow of the stone I hammered the knife into his heart.

" A shriek of agony. The warm blood spurted up over my hand and arm, and in a few seconds all was over.

" I cut off his head and threw it into the sea, to be food for the dog-fish.

" My vengeance was then complete.

" That, gentlemen, is my story—the story of *L'uomo che mai sorrise.*"

VI.

THE ONLY SURVIVOR;
OR, ONE OUT OF SIXTEEN THOUSAND.

AN INDIAN TALE.



It is the 13th of January, 1842; from the ramparts of the fortress of Jellalabad, in Afghanistan, a solitary figure is seen riding over the plain towards the city. The animal he bestrides is but a pony, and is apparently so utterly exhausted as to be barely able to crawl.

The rider also bends over the saddle, and rocks to and fro, as though each moment he would fall; his head and right arm are bound up, and altogether his appearance is pitiable in the extreme.

Wearily, slowly, the wounded man traverses the plain. At last, however, the haven of safety and rest is reached; the gates are thrown open, the fugitive—for such his appearance bespeaks him—enters, and dismounting, is led into the presence of the general commanding, Sir Robert Sale.

What dreadful tale is this he tells? Why do the cheeks of the hearers pale and then flush with hate and fury?

The fugitive is Dr. Brydon, of the Indian army. Seven days previously he left the city of Cabul, in company with a British force numbering, with camp-followers, women, and children, sixteen thousand souls; and of that army, which, under guarantees of safety from treacherous Afghans, set out to march from Cabul

to Jellalabad, Dr. Brydon is the only one who escaped to tell the bloody tale.

* * * * *

A few words as to the situation of affairs, which led to the terrible massacre of which Dr. Brydon brought the news.

Afghanistan is situated to the north and west of our Indian possessions, but does not form any part of India proper. It is divided from India by lofty ranges of mountains, and is itself a hilly country. In winter the climate is very severe, and in the hilly parts ice and snow abound. I mention this fact, because the horrors of the retreat from Cabul were so dreadfully aggravated by the cold, which jars with our tropical notions of India.

In the year 1841, it was determined to make war on certain Afghan chiefs, who had refused or neglected to comply with our demands, which, as conquerors—rightly or wrongly—we determined to enforce. Accordingly, an expedition was despatched to Afghanistan.

Most people have heard of the *Khyber Pass*, in the Khyber mountains, which, with the great Sulinam range, divide India from Afghanistan. The Khyber Pass has been called the Iron Gate to India. It is the only pass practicable for an army. Through this pass Alexander the Great and Tamerlane marched their hosts in their attempts to conquer India. We, more wisely, conquered this rich country by sea, landing our forces and establishing our manufactories on the river and ocean shores, and gradually but surely extending our dominion. Alexander and Tamerlane forced the Khyber Pass from the north, as the only available means of overrunning the rich plains of India. But the time came when we, proud of our splendid conquests, determined to force it from the south, and chastise the hostile Afghan chiefs.

We succeeded so far as to send an army across the mountains through the Pass, and occupy the principal cities in Afghanistan. At the date of which we speak, Sir Robert, then General Sale, with a small force, held possession of the city and fortified place, Jellalabad.

Another army, commanded by General Elphinstone, held Cabul, the capital of Afghanistan. At first our troops swept like a torrent over the land, conquering all before them. But the terrible Khyber Pass fought against us. It is true we marched a small invading force through it; but this done, the savage and warlike Afghans so infested the mountains and defiles around, as almost

completely to cut off the communication of the invading force with India. Several times reinforcements for our small army were repulsed at this terrible Pass with great loss; and in the beginning of January, 1842, the forces under General Sale at Jellalabad and General Elphinstone at Cabul were in dreadful want, both of provisions and men. No more discouraging situation can well be conceived; here were two small armies, each occupying a city in a hostile country, distant from each other ninety miles, cut off from communication with our government in the south, and suffering from disease and scarcity of provisions.

At last, affairs got so desperate at Cabul, that it became a question between starvation, annihilation, or retreat. Either of the two former seemed probable enough, but, alas! the latter was but a desperate alternative.

However, the situation was so desperate, that negotiations were opened with the native chiefs, and it was finally agreed that the British should be allowed to retreat from Cabul. It was a condition of this treaty that Sir Robert Sale should evacuate Jellalabad, and that all other places taken by the British were also to be evacuated.

Akbar Khan, the most powerful of the Afghan chiefs, and who, probably from the renown of our conquests in India, pretended to be friendly, engaged to supply the army retreating from the city of Cabul with provisions, and also to act as escort. How the treacherous ruffian fulfilled his engagements, the sequel will show.

On the 6th of January, the British force marched out of the cantonments at Cabul, to encounter the miseries of a winter through a country mountainous and inhospitable; where every pass and defile, if in the possession of an enemy, must prove the grave of hundreds. Snow covered the ground, which was one sheet of dazzling white, and the cold was most intense. No sooner had the British commenced to evacuate the fort, where they were comparatively safe, than the treacherous natives opened a destructive fire from the walls and every available point. Before the rear guard had passed out through the gates, Lieutenant Hardyman and fifty soldiers lay lifeless on the snow.

It was two o'clock in the morning before the retreating force halted at Bygram, where they encamped without shelter in the snow. As for the promised escort, it was nowhere to be seen; and in place thereof, hordes of Afghans hovered about in the hope of

plunder. On the 7th the march was renewed, and early in the day numerous small bodies of Afghan horse and foot were made out on the flanks and in the rear. These were at first taken for the promised escort, but, alas! that illusion was soon dispelled. They attacked the rear-guard, and seized some baggage, and when driven off, maintained a harassing fire, from which each moment some poor soldier dropped. Shortly afterwards, a body of Afghan horse charged into the very midst of the baggage, and carried off much plunder, killing and wounding many non-combatants and camp-followers, and creating the greatest alarm. Many fell from exhaustion; others perished from cold, and two guns were compelled to be abandoned.

On the night of the second day, the force halted at the entrance of the Khoord-Cabul Pass. Here the treacherous Akbar Khan made his appearance, and demanded six hostages, to ensure our not marching beyond Tezeen before news should come of General Sale having evacuated Jellalabad in compliance with the treaty. This demand was complied with, and night closed in with all its horrors. Imagine sixteen thousand men, women, and children, jammed up in a mass at the mouth of a narrow defile, and surrounded by perfect hosts of Afghans, who thronged every hill around. Starvation—cold—exhaustion—death!—it is impossible to say how many perished before morning.

On January the 8th, at daybreak, the treacherous foe again commenced their fire; every hill and rock sputtered and blazed with the fire of their *juzails*. And then the order went forth to thread the dreadful Khoord-Cabul Pass. The idea was terrible, but it must be done. The Pass was five miles long, and fifty or sixty yards wide, and crowned by rocks six hundred or seven hundred feet high, all of which were covered by savage and implacable foes. Down the centre dashed a mountain torrent, the edges of which were all frost and snow. This the unfortunate retreating army had to cross twenty-eight times before reaching the end.

No sooner was the Pass entered, than a perfect storm of bullets hailed around. The ladies were in front with a guard, as offering the best chance of escape, and were ruthlessly fired at, Lady Sale being wounded in the arm by a shot; and now, as the crowd presses on, the attack of the enemy becomes fiercer and more sustained. Immense masses of rock are hurled from above, which come thundering, crashing down, killing, maiming, and crushing all in their way. It is a terrible scene—shricks, groans, and yells—the

furious shouts of the English soldiers mingled with the yells of the cowardly foe and the constant rattle of musketry.

On, on,—still the survivors press through that dreadful Pass, marking their way by a line of dead behind them.

In this Pass at least four thousand perished, among whom were fifteen officers. Lieutenant Sturt, of the Engineers, was mortally wounded, and fell; Lieutenant Mein, of Her Majesty's British Light Infantry—his intimate friend—went back on hearing the fact, and singly defended him with his sword for some minutes. Then he was joined by gallant Sergeant Deane, of the Sappers, with whose assistance he dragged his wounded friend along in a blanket. Nor did those brave fellows relinquish their burden till they had carried, or rather dragged, him through the remainder of the Pass. Alas! their heroism was in vain, for the unfortunate officer died the next day. In vain?—no, not in vain, for this Lieutenant Sturt was buried with military honours before the march was resumed, and was the only man of all who fell in that disastrous retreat who received Christian burial. Lieutenant Mein was himself desperately wounded, and his heroic conduct and fidelity to his dying friend deserve a record.

At last the dreadful Pass is threaded, lines of corpses strewing the road behind; but as the survivors press up on the mountains, the climate becomes hourly more inclement, and hourly the number of those that perish from cold and exhaustion increases. Now snow begins to fall, which adds to their miseries. Snow and ice above and below, and ruthless enemies around; no provisions, but little ammunition, and no hopes of succour;—is it possible to conceive a more horrible predicament?

The night passed, and the morning of the 9th January broke to only increased misery. Many a wretched being looked with envy at the corpse by his side, and prayed for death as a relief from his dreadful sufferings.

Just as the wretched remnant were about again to start on their weary march, a message came from the ruffian, Akbar Khan, recommending them to rest, and promising supplies. Although every one, even the native soldiers, were now convinced of this chief's treachery, his advice, or rather command, was listened to, and a halt ordered. The only chance of escape consisted in pushing on as fast as possible, and by a strange fatality the general ordered a halt.

The condition of the force was now pitiable in the extreme.

Scarcely one of the ladies had tasted a meal since leaving Cabul. Some had infants, others were ill, and many who, trusting to the promises of Akbar Khan, had been carried out sick in litters, had only their night-dresses on to cover them.

It was under these circumstances that Akbar Khan demanded the ladies and some of the officers as hostages. It was a terrible alternative, but, in the dreadful state they were, the only chance. Hitherto, Akbar Khan had taken no *active* part in the hostilities, and it was thought that his fears of the future vengeance of the English might cause him to spare the prisoners. At all events, it was done; and all the ladies, accompanied by their husbands, were delivered up to this ruffian chief.

On the 10th, at break of day, the march was resumed. The Sepoys and native cavalry were now quite useless—all were disabled or frost-bitten, and even the English cavalry soldiers who were unwounded had to be *lifted on their horses*. Many of the men could not pull a trigger, much less hold a musket; and as to the wounded, their fate can be easily imagined; they lay where they fell, and either died or were massacred by the brutal enemy. And now in front there is another gorge or pass; and long before the troops reached it, crowds of Afghans were observed hurrying before, and crowding up the steep rocks on either side.

No sooner did the advance approach within shot, than the enemy, secure on their high ground, commenced the attack, pouring in a terrible fire upon the crowded, disorganized mass as it drew near. Numbers fell at every volley, and the mouth of the gorge was choked with dead and dying long before the rear-guard reached it. The English troops were in front, and alone kept together; the Sepoys were utterly disorganized and broken, and must have thrown away their arms. No sooner had the English soldiers passed up the gorge, than the Afghans rushed down, sword in hand, on the helpless crowd of Sepoys and camp-followers, and massacred them like sheep. All the native troops here fell victims, and all the baggage was taken by the enemy.

Meanwhile, the advance pushed on, and for nearly five miles met with no opposition, so intent were the Afghans on the plunder of the baggage. After marching thus five miles, the small advance hastily halted to allow the rear to come up, but only a few stragglers joined; and then the astounding fact burst on the small band, that they were the sole survivors of the Cabul army: fifty horse artillerymen, seventy of Her Majesty's 44th, and one hundred

cavalry troopers, with about one thousand camp-followers and stragglers, were all that remained of sixteen thousand!

About five miles ahead was another narrow defile, the bed of a mountain stream. Here a ghastly sight met the eyes of the small band who still pressed on. A number of camp-followers and stragglers had gone on in front of the column. They had been attacked, and their corpses now strewed the narrow defiles, so that the little remnant had literally to walk on the dead in their onward march. In their passage down this defile, a destructive fire was maintained, and fresh dead and wounded lined the course of the stream. The wretched remnant of an army reached the Tezeen valley beyond the defile by evening, having lost since the start from Cabul more than fifteen thousand.

It was now evening; but, nevertheless, it was determined to push on to Jugdulluk, a distance of twenty-two miles, as there was a strong and dangerous Pass, which it would be impossible to force with so few men. Here the last gun was abandoned, and, sad to say, Dr. Carden, who had been wounded and lashed to the carriage, was left. No matter how good the will, there was scarcely a man of the party but had difficulty in struggling along alone; to carry a wounded man was simply impossible. Notwithstanding, the march was kept up all night; when the morning broke, the Jugdulluk Pass was still some ten miles distant, and already the hordes of the enemy began to crown the heights.

It was late in the afternoon of the 11th before the exhausted little band reached Jugdulluk, where they encamped to snatch a short repose behind some ruined walls before entering the Pass. When they did again press on, they were assailed on all sides by the infuriate foe. The *juzails* of the enemy kept up an incessant fire, and again, as in the first Pass, vast stones were hurled down on the devoted survivors. At this time, Captain Bygrave, with only fifteen Englishmen, charged up the heights, from which the enemy kept up a fearful fire, and drove thousands of the cowardly scoundrels before their bayonets. But this produced only a short respite; for the heroic little band had no sooner returned than the enemy marched back again, to be driven off at the bayonets' point, and again to resume their death-dealing post so soon as the few white men, worn out and weak, rejoined their comrades. Still clinging to life, the wretched band moved on, leaving each moment dead and wounded behind them,

The Jugdulluk Pass is about two miles long, very narrow, and enclosed by lofty hills. It slopes upwards, and at the summit they found their progress barred by a barricade the Afghans had erected. Removing this caused great delay, and the enemy massed themselves in large numbers on each side. A terrible massacre shortly commenced, the Afghans rushing in furiously on the helpless camp-followers, the sick, and the wounded, while it was with difficulty even the armed Europeans could keep the ruthless foe at bay. A miserable small remnant forced their way through. Twelve officers were here killed, and many more wounded, and perforce abandoned to their fate.

Still the unhappy survivors press on, men falling dead and wounded at almost every step. When the morning of the 13th dawned, the numerical weakness of the little band was fully revealed to the enemy, who, encouraged thereby and confident in their numbers, grew bolder in their attacks. Hitherto they had contented themselves with firing and hurling stones from the rocks at the sides of the various defiles, but now they pressed quite close on our poor exhausted men, who kept them back only by the bayonet.

At this time the English could only muster about twenty muskets. These brave fellows, back to back, stubbornly fought their way on, shielding to the last the unarmed, the sick, and the slightly wounded, who managed to crawl along. Of non-combatants, or such as were unable to bear arms, there were at this time about sixty.

The attacks of the enemy now became so pressing, that the little force was compelled to leave the road and fight its way to the high ground as the only hope. The height gained, the twenty brave soldiers who still lived formed themselves in front, placing the non-combatants and officers in the rear, and prepared with desperate resolution to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

At this time an attempt was made to treat with the foe. Major Griffiths dauntlessly volunteered to descend the hill on which they were posted, and try and make terms for their lives. Accordingly, raising a white handkerchief on the point of his sword, he did so, and his comrades watched him as he gave himself up to the enemy with feelings of bitter grief and fear, for they had but little hope of his life.

Several Afghans now ascended the hill, and pretended friendship and peaceful intentions. These were followed by many others,

till the little body of heroes was completely surrounded by the treacherous enemy. The English soldiers looked on with scowling brows, and with despair in their hearts, but still kept a firm front, and prevented the Afghans from reaching the sick and wounded. But at last their patience was tried beyond endurance. Some of the Afghans attempted to snatch away their muskets. Goaded to fury, the British soldiers charged the mob, and at the bayonets' point drove them fiercely down the hill.

The die was cast; all was over, and the last scene of slaughter commenced. The men were without ammunition, and the enemy took up a position on a hill front and rear, and at their ease shot man after man, officer after officer. At times bodies of Afghans would rush up the hill, sword in hand, but the dauntless, stubborn bravery of the ten or twelve men left, always sent them howling back.

At length, when every man was wounded, a final attack of the enemy in overwhelming numbers terminated the unequal conflict. Captain Souter, who was desperately wounded, tied the colours of the regiment around his waist, and endeavoured to escape, but he was cut down and captured. Twelve officers, who were mounted on horses or ponies, charged through the enemy, and for the time made their escape. They did not leave their posts, however, till the last soldier had been cut down, fighting to the death.

The twelve officers who got away from the scene of this direful massacre rode on towards Futtehabad, closely pursued by the enemy. Their horses and themselves were equally tired out; their chance was a miserable one. Six were slaughtered on the road; but six, viz., Captain Bellow, Captains Collier and Hopkins, Lieutenant Bird, Dr. Harpur, and Dr. Brydon, reached Futtehabad. But here the wounded, despairing fugitives found no rest. They unwisely delayed a few minutes to moisten their parched throats at a well in the centre of a village. This gave the inhabitants time to arm, and suddenly attack the poor weary and wounded men. Captain Bellow and Lieutenant Bird were cut down before they could remount their wretched horses. Captains Collier and Hopkins, with Drs. Harpur and Brydon, succeeded in escaping from this village, and rode off towards Jellalabad, the haven of hope. They were overtaken within a short distance of the city—actually in sight of the walls of the fortress from which the British flag proudly floated. Of the four fugitives, three were doomed now to look their last on their country's banner, on each other, and on

the world. Fighting to the last, Collicr, Hopkins, and Dr. Harpur were cut down and slaughtered. Dr. Brydon, whose pony happened to be either fresher or fleetier than the others, by a miracle escaped. The yells of the savage Afghans, mingled with the death-cry of his friends, rang in his ears. Jellalabad is before him. With despairing energy he urges his little pony to one last desperate exertion; he gains the open ground, where they dare not follow, and is saved!

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And now we have returned to the solitary horseman, wounded, weary, with heavy heart and bowed down head, painfully toiling on towards the haven of rest, with the bitter knowledge that his companions, his friends, are all slain, and that he alone has escaped of all the British army.

Such was the retreat and destruction of the British army of Cabul.

VII.

AN ADVENTURE WITH A WATER-SPOUT.

BECALMED on the line—the tropical noon-day sun streaming vertically down on the white decks, causing the pitch to boil and seethe in pools, and compelling the sailors to wear shoes—a thing which in fine weather they very much object to do. But in this case the decks were like “hot bricks,” and perforce they had to wear shoes under blistering penalties.

Such was our position in the autumn of the year 1852, in the ship *Seringapatam*, bound from London to Calcutta. I was a midshipman on board, and this was my first voyage. A rough passage across the Bay of Biscay had quite cured me of sea-sickness and home-sickness, and I had now got my “sea legs,” as the sailors say, and considered myself a regular salt.

We had been in the “doldrums,” as the light baffling winds near the line are called, for nearly a fortnight, and for the last week had been utterly becalmed. The sea was like glass, and, ere the long swell which usually prevails had gone down, we lay motionless in the glare of the sun. Indeed, so complete was our rest, that for the last two or three days the ship’s boats had been got out in order to tow her clear from the dirty water and the refuse thrown overboard; very few even old sailors had ever witnessed so dead and prolonged a calm.

Thus then we lay, sails hanging idly from the yards, broiling in the equatorial sun. It is usually cooler at sea than on land in the same latitude; but never before or since, though I have visited

most hot countries, have I ever found a heat so terrible. Well, towards the evening of the seventh or eighth day, to our great joy clouds and rain-squalls appeared on the horizon. The skipper hopefully looked out at these, and, after an old sailor's superstition, whistled low and soft for the expected breeze.

Every evening the midshipmen had been accustomed, by permission, to take the dingy and row out a short distance in order to bathe. The crew were also allowed this privilege, a good lookout being kept from the mast-head for sharks. On this occasion I was one of the first to plunge into the sea from the little boat—the smallest on board, by-the-bye—and which we looked on as our special property. I was a good swimmer, and at once struck out and swam away from the boat, luxuriating in the pleasant, refreshing, though, from the great heat, almost warm bath. We had always been cautioned not to swim far from the boat or ship, but on this occasion I swam on and on till I was quite half a mile away. I did not notice the rapidly approaching squalls and rain; I was in no particular hurry, and did not turn to look back for nearly half an hour; when I did so, a marvellous sight met my eyes. Half way at least around the horizon was studded with black squalls, and I could plainly distinguish the rain falling in perfect torrents. But this was not what filled me with amazement: phantoms appearing when bidden from empty space, I could distinguish many vast black columns, some indeed up in the rain-squalls, others far in advance, and coming apparently right down on the ship.

These I knew were *water-spouts*, the wondrous phenomena only to be seen in the tropical seas. They appeared to be moving at a tremendous rate, rushing hither and thither in a terrible manner. I at once made for the boat at full speed, in no little alarm. Now too, a light breeze came over the sea, and rain commenced falling. Long before I could reach the boat my five companions were all in, and having dressed, were only waiting now to run back to the ship. One of the squalls quickly struck her, and before the lighter sails could be furled she was dashing along with the wind right aft, at the rate of some ten knots. All possible haste was made of course to clue up and furl, and then she was brought up to the wind, and “bore to” under topsails and jib only. But though all possible haste had been made, she had gone over a mile ere she could be checked in her career. Then, while I was yet a quarter of a mile distant from the boat, I noticed, to my horror, that

several huge water-spouts were between it and the ship slowly coming up, threatening to overwhelm our poor little craft.

I redoubled my efforts, and swam with my whole strength and energy, and now not more than three hundred yards separate me from my companions. I can hear their shouts to me to hasten—can see them all standing up, waving their arms. Suddenly, like a charge of horsemen, several of the water-spouts rush right towards the boat. I can hear the roaring of the water, and see it being whirled up to the clouds; then the boat is lost in water-mist and foam, through which I can dimly discover the boat for an instant, and, to my horror, see her overwhelmed and whirled away like a feather in the torrent of Niagara. Before I could think or this terrible catastrophe, I am myself enveloped in the rushing waters and spray. All is lost:—a terrible death stares me in the face. One moment—a hurried prayer—a frantic cry for help, where no help can come, save from Heaven—and then I too am overwhelmed in the roaring waters.

For a moment I was stunned and breathless; and thought—if, indeed, the emotions which in a terrible moment swept through my mind could be called thought—to awake in another world. But presently I found myself able to draw a gasping breath. At first I could not understand my situation; my body was in a horizontal position, my head clear of the water, so that I could just breathe. Shortly I learned the truth. I had been sucked in by the water-spout, and was being swiftly whirled aloft to the clouds, my head and feet just protruding from the great column of water. The rapid circular motion made me feel quite sick and giddy; and for a time the blinding spray and mist near the surface prevented me seeing anything. But by degrees I was borne higher and higher above the spray and foam, and presently saw the great ocean, now swept by a furious wind, spread like a panorama beneath me. Gradually my perception got quicker, and I could make out the ship far, far away below, and distant from the base of the water-spout about two miles.

“Could they see me?” I wondered to myself.

Next, while continually being swept higher and higher, I could discern that the vessel was surrounded by these sea monsters, and heard several guns fired, as thus, by the concussion of the air, water-spouts are sometimes burst at a safe distance.

But now it seemed as if, intent with purpose, they determined to overwhelm her. Round and round they swept, now darting

quite close, now retiring, till at last one of the largest, as if tired of the sport, rushed away, and bore full down on the doomed ship.

Then I saw a vast heap of water fall, as it were, from the clouds, and overwhelm the ill-fated Indiaman. Several of the others also burst, so that the sea was, for the space of a moment, piled up with the enormous deluge of water in a sort of hill. When this subsided, and the spray had cleared off, I gazed in vain for the ship.

She had been overwhelmed—probably her decks stove in—and swamped. And now I was alone on the ocean, half a mile high in a water-spout—a terrible, a horrible, apparently a hopeless situation; and that I am alive to tell the tale, I consider indeed a marvel.

Shortly I began to get delirious, and though at first I knew that the other water-spouts were closing around, I began to look upon them as vindictive demons bent on destroying me. Then another idea seized on me; for the evening previous to sailing on this my first voyage, there had been an evening party at my mother's home, and visions of familiar faces flitted before me. Then, in my delirious raving, I thought that all the water-spout demons had determined on a grand dance before finally overwhelming me.

I thought they arranged themselves for the "Lancers," and began dancing furiously. Two great monsters took places *vis-à-vis* to me, and the dance proceeded. Backwards—forward—hither—thither—they dashed; at one moment I could hear the roaring of the seething, boiling waters; then they would dart apart again—again to return. My delirium increased. I shouted and yelled, and in good truth did not know where I was. I laughed and stormed as I thought the dance went on, and presently my reason was so overcome, that, fancying one of the spouts was making a mistake, I cried angrily, again and again, "Ladies chain!"

I don't know whether they heard or paid attention to me, for the next moment I felt a terrible concussion—was enveloped in, as it were, a cataract of water, and felt myself falling—falling—through the space, till, suffocated and stunned, I lost all consciousness.

The water-spout had burst, and I was cast into the sea—a naked waif on the wide ocean. I don't know how long it was, but presently a gleam of consciousness came back, and I knew I had risen to the surface. I felt something hard, and mechanically clung to

it with the death-grip of the drowning. Then again I became insensible, and when next I recovered, I found myself lying on a couch, while strenuous efforts were being made to recover me. I will pass over the agony of that time during which I lingered between life and death—the pains in every limb, the dreadful pain in breathing, and how, with my first breath, I prayed to be allowed to die. Let it suffice that I recovered, and learned I had been picked up by a homeward-bound ship, the *Bertha*, which the breeze had brought up in time. They had seen some pieces of wreck floating about, and to one of these a figure clinging. A boat was lowered, and I was saved. I told my wondrous tale, and was almost laughed at. They would not at first believe that I was the only survivor of all the crew and passengers of the *Seringapatam*. Ship and boat had been engulfed by the water-spouts, and I alone left to tell the tale.

IX.

A GHOST IN CHAMBERS.

THE following story was told by a passenger, a gentleman going out to practise as a lawyer at the Calcutta bar. He always declared it was true, but as to believing it or not, the reader can please himself.

“Some years ago I came to London, fresh from school, with the intention of studying the law. A friend, George Verulam, had kindly undertaken to initiate me into London life, aid me in furnishing my chambers, and altogether act the part of Mentor to my inexperience.

“George Verulam was studying for the law also, but he was to be a solicitor, while the bar was my ambition. He occupied chambers in Barnard’s Inn, Holborn, and thither I went with my luggage straight from the railway station.

“The first evening we gave up to amusement. I was young—had never been in London before—and it seemed to me a city of wonders. We went first to the theatre, and afterwards to Evans’s supper-rooms. The next day, accompanied by George, the only fellow I knew in London, I set out in search of chambers in Gray’s Inn, where I had entered my name as a student for the bar. I selected a set of three rooms on the third floor, and having been duly installed as a tenant, and received the keys, my next object was to furnish them.

“Here, again, George Verulam was of great assistance to me. He took me round to sundry brokers and second-hand furniture dealers, till, for a sum of about thirty pounds, I had purchased sufficient furniture for my modest desires. It took me a week or two to get settled, but this done, I went steadily to work—reading

hard all day, dining in hall, and then, generally, either going for a stroll, or spending the evening with George.

"He occupied a small set of chambers in Barnard's Inn, only a hundred yards or so from Gray's Inn. His rooms, though small, were most tastfully furnished, and had none of that bare, desolate look usual to bachelors' chambers. On the contrary, once inside the massive oak door, and in the small sitting-room, you were reminded more of a neat parlour in a small country-house than of chambers in a dreary little Inn. It was not that the furniture was expensive, far from it, but it bore a general air of comfort and taste. It was long before I discovered the secret of this, but when I did so I ceased longer to wonder.

"The porter of the Inn—a grey-haired old man, who had seen better days—lived in the lodge with his daughter, a pretty, bright-eyed, passionate girl of eighteen. Of John Sebright's history nothing could be learned, but five minutes' conversation with him was enough to convince anyone that his station had been, at one time, far different, and that he was not by any means uneducated. He had some small annuity or pension of some kind, and with this, the Inn salary, and what he managed to make by the tenants of the various chambers, lived in comfort and ease. Indeed, it was whispered, and generally believed, that when the old man died, his daughter Clara would be left by no means penniless, and some even went so far as to say she would have a good round sum of money.

"It was the custom of many of the tenants of chambers in Barnard's Inn to pay John Sebright a weekly stipend of five shillings, for which sum he engaged that their rooms and stairs should be kept clean, and they should receive a certain amount of attendance. For this purpose he kept two servant-girls, and these, with the supervision of Clara Sebright, managed all the work of the Inn.

"Now Clara, as well as being pretty, was refined in her taste, and did not do any of the household work with her own hands. Though an industrious girl, she had no taste for drudgery such as that, nor did her father wish her to do it. Somehow or other, my friend George had made her acquaintance, and was an especial favourite. In his favour Clara made an exception, and indeed, invariably superintended in person his simple domestic arrangements. Hence the neatness and air of comfort which invariably characterised his rooms.

"Clara was always neatly, plainly, though not coarsely dressed.

Her hands were white, her figure graceful, her manner ladylike, and altogether she produced on me the most favourable impression.

"I very soon discovered that the girl had more than a passing regard for my friend. She would linger in the room when she had brought up the tea equipage or hot water for grog; and I often noted her face brighten up, and her eyes sparkle, when he spoke to her either in earnest or jest.

"Poor girl! I saw all this, and pitied her, for, besides the difference in their stations, I felt pretty sure my friend had no serious thoughts of her. He was pleased by her assiduous gentle care, doubtless felt flattered by her obvious preference for himself, but that, at least at present, was all. Then, too, I had reason to believe that George Verulam had been paying his addresses to a young lady from the same part of the country as himself. Still, I observed that as month after month wore on, he grew daily more familiar and friendly with pretty Clara Sebright.

"At Christmas he went down home earlier than I did, and remained for nearly two months, whereas I only made a stay of a few days.

"On my return, I frequently had occasion to call at his chambers for books, etc., and on these occasions always saw Clara. There was no mistaking the cause of her sadness and gloom. She invariably asked when Mr. Verulam would return, and I quite pitied her when I had to tell her I did not know.

"But at last my friend returned, and, with him, the smiles and dimples on Clara's pretty face also came back. The winter passed, and bright spring was upon us before we knew it.

"It was, I think, early in May, that George Verulam in my presence one evening offered to take Clara to the Crystal Palace. I shall not forget the look of beaming joy with which she accepted his offer.

"'I declare I believe the girl's in love with me!' he said, laughing, after she had left the room.

"'It's a great shame of you to make a fool of her, George.'

"'I don't want to make a fool of her,' he replied, peevishly; 'I like the girl very much—she is so modest, gentle, and pretty—and upon my soul I don't know, if it were not for her accursed poverty and other obstacles, that I might not marry her. She's certainly too good for such a place as this. I wonder what's the history of that old father of hers? You can get nothing out of him. He's as reserved as though he were a duke.'

“‘What do you mean doing to-morrow? Do you really intend taking her to the Crystal Palace—that is to say, if her father will allow her to go?’

“‘Oh, her father—there’ll be no difficulty about that, for I have found out already she can do exactly as she likes. Take her? Yes, of course I shall take her. I have never seen her outside the Inn, but I’ll bet a crown she turns out like a lady; I don’t mean to say in silks and satins, but whatever she does wear will be in good taste and well put on. Will you come down with us to-morrow, and we will all dine together?’

“‘I can’t go with you, and I can’t dine with you, because I have an appointment at twelve o’clock which may keep me, and I must be back in town by six. But I will run down in the afternoon for a couple of hours.’

“And it was settled that I should do so, and return to town about four, leaving them to dine together, either in the palace or at one of the contiguous hotels.

“The following day, true to my appointment, I went down by train from London Bridge. I had expected to see Clara Sebright tastefully though rather poorly dressed, but I was perfectly astonished at the appearance she presented.

“I am not well up in the technical details of ladies’ dress, but will describe, as well as I can, Clara’s attire. In the first place, she wore a plain black silk dress, fitting close to her figure, and coming rather high up to her neck. A red leather belt with silver clasp was her only adornment. A dark bonnet, trimmed with red roses, beneath which her luxuriant hair was closely braided, became her exceedingly well. A white China-crape shawl, and lavender gloves fitting tightly on her small hands, took off the sombre effect of the black dress and bonnet, and offered a pleasing and graceful contrast. Altogether, her appearance, here imperfectly described, almost took my breath away. I could scarcely realise the fact that the graceful, white-shawled, lavender-gloved young lady before me was the porter’s daughter of Barnard’s Inn. Her every action, every motion, were those of a well-bred lady—and it was with evident pride that George Verulam paraded his fair companion about.

“Now, it could be seen at once by anyone that Clara Sebright was desperately in love with my friend, Verulam. At first I did know what to think of it; but I now came to the conclusion that Verulam had more than a passing regard for the girl.

"I think that I have already mentioned that Verulam was already engaged to a young lady in the country, a distant relative. Now, this was a most desirable match. He was poor, his mother was poor, and a pending lawsuit, should it go against her, would reduce her to actual penury. But it so happened that this suit was instituted by the Court of Chancery, whose ward Verulam's *fiancée* was; and as she was desperately in love with him, all would end well if he married her.

"He bore a good character, was well connected, so that there would be no difficulty in getting the consent of the Court to his marriage with its ward.

"But somehow this arrangement was distasteful to George Verulam. Letters came from the girl nearly every day, but I could not help noticing the great change which had taken place in his manner of receiving them.

"When first I knew him, these letters were eagerly read and generally answered at once. I breakfasted with him frequently, and as I was an earlier riser than he, frequently saw the letters on his table, and noticed his manner as he opened them.

"Sometimes he did not read them, but after glancing over their contents, would throw them into the fire; and I noticed that if at any time Clara Sebright entered the room while he held the letter, he almost mechanically crushed it up.

"I could see how affairs were; I believe he could also, but endeavoured to blind himself.

"I, as his intimate friend, used to have the run of his chambers, law-books, papers, and, in fact, was as often in Barnard's Inn as in my own place. I use to ask for his key, and walk in and out as I chose.

"Now, I want you to understand that there were two keys to the outer door; one he had himself, the other was used by Clara Sebright, in order that she might have access to the chambers in his absence. I had been at the place all the afternoon on one occasion; neither of us felt inclined for work or reading of any kind, so we sat and smoked and talked.

"About four o'clock we went out to dinner. Afterwards he proposed we should go up into the billiard-room of the hotel, and play at pool.

"I did not object, and it was so settled.

"'Give me your keys, George,' I said, all at once; 'I have left my meerschaum in your room.'

"He gave them to me, and I hastened to Barnard's Inn, only a few hundred yards distant. I need not have taken the key, for I found the door open. Clara had entered in order to put the room tidy.

"She was seated at the table when I came in, her face hidden in her hands. A letter was lying open before her. She started up on hearing me, and I saw she had been crying. She snatched up the letter, and turned away, evidently ashamed of my witnessing her grief.

"I called after her, but she only hurried away the faster, and I heard her feet pattering down the old wooden stairs, and the rustle of her dress as she rushed away.

"I could not find my pipe at once, so went from the sitting-room into the bed-room adjoining, where I met with no better success. After searching in vain for some little time, I gave it up in despair. I had closed the outer door of the chamber before entering the bed-room.

"The door was very massive, of solid oak, and opened noisily and with difficulty. I had seen the girl hurriedly leave on my entrance; with my own eyes saw her descend a part of the staircase, and even after she was lost to view had heard the rustle of her dress.

"What, then, was my astouishment on again hearing the same rustling sound in the passage and in the sitting-room!

"It seemed as though some one ran quickly down the passage, and entered the principal room. The sound subsided suddenly, as though whoever it was had taken a seat, or stood still.

"I was not exactly alarmed, for no thought of anything supernatural at first crossed my mind. It was a feeling of wonder I experienced—mystification, and an inability to account for the noise.

"No one had entered the chambers. Of that I was quite sure.

"Was it possible that some one had been concealed?

"There was a little pantry at the end of the passage. A thought struck me; my friend might have had a visitor, who, on hearing me enter, had concealed herself.

"But no, that could not be; I knew his tastes and habits better. Besides, the girl whom I had just seen there must have known of anyone's presence. All these thoughts passed rapidly through my mind—not, perhaps, in such definite shape as I have here put them, but still quite distinctly.

"The door of the room was ajar; I pushed it open and entered. Imagine my astonishment;—there, in the chair in which I had seen her ten minutes before, sat Clara Sebright! Her face was hidden by her hands, but I knew it was she by her figure and dress.

"Speechless with amazement, I started back with a slight exclamation.

"It flashed in my mind that I must have been mistaken as to closing the outer door; so, as I stepped back, I turned and looked. It was closed, as I thought. Then I went back into the room.

"All this time my only feeling was one of supreme wonder. What could it all mean? But on my second entry into the room, it was different. The figure in the chair had raised its head, and was looking towards the door of the room.

"Then I felt instinctively that it was no mortal form which sat before me. A deadly chill came over me, and I almost cried aloud with sudden terror. The face of the phantom was turned full on me, and then it was that I noticed its ghastly hue. It was not white, but of an ashen-grey colour, the colour of a corpse.

"I staggered back, and out into the passage. Again I heard the rustling of silk, and the figure rushed past me—not walking, but borne on by an unknown power. I saw now that there was something around the neck of the phantom. What it was I could not tell; it appeared to me to be like a handkerchief, knotted. The figure vanished through the door, quickly and suddenly—and I was again alone. I went into the sitting-room and looked around; there was nothing there now but myself.

"Could it have been a dream? I tried to persuade myself it was fancy—a delusion—but in vain; my shaking hand, the fluttering of my heart, and my white face in the glass, told me that it was no fancy. I seated myself to collect my thoughts, but think as I would I could make nothing of it—except that I had seen a ghost. So I took a glass of brandy to steady my shaken nerves, and without waiting to search for my meerschaum, left the chamber. As I went out by the gate I looked into the lodge, and inquired of old Sebright after his daughter. I suppose there was something peculiar in my voice and manner, for he stared and answered me abruptly—'She was quite well.' I did not tell George of my vision, though he questioned me as to the cause of my silence and strange manner. But I did not choose to be laughed at, so held my tongue as to the apparition.

"The next day I went round to Barnard's Inn immediately after breakfast. I found George Verulam in a state of great alarm and amazement; his rooms were all in disorder—no fire lighted—no breakfast-table spread. Clara Sebright had not been seen or heard of since the previous afternoon!

"We went down to the lodge to her father together. The old man was in a great state of grief and terror. He could form no idea as to what had become of her. Then I drew George on one side, and as we walked up and down the quadrangle, told him what I had seen the previous afternoon. He did not laugh at me, but seemed deeply impressed.

"He told me that the morning before he had received a letter from the country, from his mother, urging an immediate marriage with the young lady to whom he was engaged. Could it be that this letter was the one which Clara Sebright had been reading when I saw her first?

"George Verulam recollected that he had left the letter lying about. We both went up stairs and searched for it, but without success. It was nowhere to be found. Then we went down and questioned the old man more closely. The last time he had seen his daughter was on the previous afternoon; she had gone down to the cellar for some purpose. He had thought nothing more of it, but supposed that she had come up and gone out without his knowledge.

"George Verulam seemed struck with a sudden thought. He obtained a light and went down into the cellar. 'It's no use,' said old Sebright, testily—'she is not there: what could she be doing there?' A vague anticipation of some great calamity came over me, and I went out into the crowded street, and walked about for a time.

"Suddenly, as I passed the gates, a loud cry from the lodge fell on my ears. I shudderingly entered. The old man was on the floor in a fit. George Verulam was standing over him with the candle in his hand. He was ghastly white, and trembled violently.

"'For Heaven's sake, what is the matter, George?' I asked.

"'Go down, and see,' he said, falteringly.

"I took the candle, and went down into the cellar, where a terrible sight assailed me; Clara Sebright's lifeless body hung half suspended from a large nail in the wall, by a white handkerchief round the neck. She had committed suicide, and it was indeed her apparition I had seen.

"Of course she was quite dead; she had been hanging since the previous afternoon. When she went down after my surprising her in the rooms, she must have at once fastened the handkerchief round her neck and committed suicide. Her beautiful features were horribly swollen, discoloured, and disfigured; and it was with a feeling of faintness and sickness that I cut the handkerchief, and unfastened it from her neck.

"There is little more to tell. She must have found the letter in Verulam's rooms; read it; and finding it fatal to her hopes—for she loved him passionately—must have at once determined on destroying herself.

"There was an inquest, of course; but as nothing was said, either by George or myself, as to the true reason, known only to ourselves, for the rash act, a verdict of 'Temporary insanity,' was returned; and the body of poor lost Clara Sebright received Christian burial.

"George never held up his head again. He reproached himself bitterly as the cause of the poor girl's untimely end. I fear, indeed, that matters had gone farther between them than I had any idea of at the time. He left London shortly afterwards—went abroad—and I have neither seen nor heard from him since."

X.

D O L O R A ;

OR, A MEXICAN'S VENGEANCE.



My beautiful, my glorious, my peerless young bride! What though the blue blood of Old Castille does not flow in your veins?—the light of love welling up from the depths of your soft eyes is enough for me. What though you brought me no golden dower, family jewels, caskets of pearls and rubies?—the sheen of your bright hair glistening golden in the sunlight is treasure enough for me. I want no pearls when I see your white teeth gleaming on me—no rubies when I can kiss your rich red lips; my love—my soul—my wife!

I first saw Dolora in the shop of her father, the old armourer of the city of Mexico. Myself, I am descended in a direct line from the old Spanish *conquistadores*, and have not one drop of Mexican or sordid blood in my veins.

Gonzalvo Saldanha was a Spaniard; his daughter Dolora, beautiful as summer night, was the offspring of his marriage with a Mexican woman—a half-breed. The rich and noble gallants of the city of Mexico and surrounding country sighed in vain for the favour of bright-eyed Dolora. Despite her despised Mexican blood, Dolora was proud and chaste—pure as the driven snow.

I was standing in the shop, conversing with her father as to the fashion of the sword-blade he was making for me, when, looking up, I saw at a few paces' distance a dream—a vision of beauty. A young girl dressed in black velvet was gazing full at me. Hair of a bright golden hue, eyes of deep violet, complexion a rich transparent olive, and features absolutely perfect; ravishingly lovely,

of medium height, her figure was the very ideal of grace and symmetry. We stood gazing at each other—I, spell-bound, till the voice of her father aroused me to myself.

"And now, senor," he said, "what motto, or what fair lady's name, will you have on the blade of this good sword? It is the custom of the young and noble cavaliers who honour me with their commands to have a family motto, crest, couplet, name, or device, worked on the blue steel."

I hesitated. A thought struck me.

"Maiden," I said, approaching Dolora, and respectfully taking her hand, "come forward; you shall decide for me."

She blushed, cast down her eyes, but suffered me to lead her forward into the shop.

"Nay, good senor," said the armourer, in a tone of annoyance, "my daughter knows nothing of these things. Dolora, retire."

"Not so," I said, hastily. "Pardon me, good armourer; you said, I think, this damsel was your daughter?"

"She is my daughter, senor," the old man answered, somewhat sternly, "and a good, honest girl. God have mercy on the man who would make her otherwise, for I will have none. Be he prince, noble, or peasant, that man shall die, senor, if there is virtue in the steel blades I forge."

"Ha! ha!" I laughed lightly; "is it so? Then how can I do better than have her virgin name graven on this virgin blade? It shall be so, Gonzalvo; let the sword bear the simple and single imprint, your daughter's name. Maiden," I said, turning to her, "I heard you called Dolora—Dolora shall be the sole device on this trusty steel; and when I draw it from its scabbard, the memory of your bright beauty shall nerve my arm to deeds of heroism. What say you?"

She cast down her eyes, and blushing deeply, murmured, "Senor, you do me honour."

"Senor," said the old man, "you are trifling with us. Dolora, retire."

He spoke very harshly, and there was a glitter in his eye which told of suppressed passion. I was young and impetuous, and as the girl was about leaving, took her hand, and was about raising it to my lips, when a shadow fell across the threshold, and a tall form brushed rudely past between us.

"Dolora, retire; do you not hear your father's commands? Come with me."

I saw a tall, dark young man, with black gleaming eyes, and whose tawny, leathern complexion betokened Indian blood. In an instant Dolora and the intruder had disappeared.

"Who is that young man?" I asked; "your son?"

"I have no son," the old man answered, coldly. "He is my nephew—the son of my late wife's brother."

His wife, now dead, had been a half-breed, more Indian than Spanish, and the young man who so abruptly led his cousin away bore evident traces on his face and complexion of the Indian taint. I was young, high-spirited, and not wont to be contradicted; so, notwithstanding the armourer's reluctance, I insisted on having the name Dolora on the blade of my sword. He was not rich, and could not afford to offend me; for had he done so, he would have lost not only my custom, but that of all the rich and noble cavaliers, my friends.

While yet I stood parleying with the old man, in hope of again seeing his lovely daughter, the cousin—he with the scowling brow and swarthy Indian face—came out, and went forth into the street. As he passed me, however, his eyes rested for a moment on my face with deadly, serpent-like glance, which caused me almost to shudder; not that I feared the man, but there seemed something of evil omen, of a hawkish nature, in those fiery black eyes, the whites inflamed as though bursting with passion. I had never before had a look of such intense and bitter hatred turned upon me. I had slain men in fair combat, and had looked on unmoved at the glazing eye, as the life-blood poured out from the wound my sword had made; and yet, when even the young man had gone, and I was alone with Gonzalvo Saldanha, I could not drive away the haunting vision of that evil glance. A sort of presentiment came over me, and I felt that this half-breed cousin would yet fatally influence my future life.

I saw no more of this truculent-looking cousin for a long time. My visits to the armourer were frequent, for I was determined, if possible, again to see his daughter; nor was I unsuccessful, despite the old man's uneasiness and alarm. On the next occasion when I saw my *inamorata*, I had an opportunity of speaking to her alone. While I was waiting in the shop talking to Gonzalvo in hopes that she would enter, a carriage drove up, and as the owner did not choose to alight, the armourer had to leave the shop, and go to the door to take his wealthy customer's order. Dolora entered almost immediately. She was dressed, as before, in

black velvet, which contrasted well with her fair hair and deep violet eyes.

"At last, sweet Dolora, I have the happiness to see you again!" I exclaimed, enthusiastically, at the same time advancing to meet her, and seizing her hand. "Where have you hidden yourself so long? and why have you denied me the pleasure of seeing you? You must have known that my visits here have been but on frivolous pretexts, in hope of seeing you."

She blushed slightly, cast down her eyes, and I felt her hand tremble in mine.

"Senor," she said, in accents soft and melodious, "you do me too much honour. I am a poor girl—you are a rich noble; there can be nothing between us in common."

"By all the saints, lovely Dolora," I cried, "but there is—and shall be! I love you—I swear by the memory of my mother that I love you truly! You shall be mine, and mine only."

"Senor, you speak of impossibilities. I can be nothing to you."

"Do you, then, hate me, Dolora?"

"Hate you! no. Why should I? I know nothing of you, except that you are rich and noble, and that my father tells me to beware of you. Pedro threatens——"

"Pedro! Who is Pedro?"

"My cousin, whom you saw the other day."

"And what right has he to threaten you?" I asked, indignantly.

"I am betrothed to him," she said, "and I shall shortly wed him."

"Dolora, it shall not be," I said, passionately; "so beautiful a flower shall never be plucked by a half-breed dog!"

"Senor, he is my relative. I like neither your words nor your manner of wooing."

She snatched her hand from my grasp, and vanished.

"Fool that I am!" I muttered; "I have offended her."

For several days I avoided the armourer's shop, and strove to conquer the strange infatuation that possessed me; but it was impossible. Then I took a bold resolve, and mounting my horse, rode into Mexico, and dismounted at the armourer's door. As I entered, I saw the flutter of a woman's dress disappearing.

"Good day, worthy Gonzalvo," I said; "I wish to speak with you."

"Say on, my lord."

"Did I not a moment back catch a glimpse of your daughter as she vanished?"

"Dolora has just left me. I ordered her to retire, as I always do when customers honour my humble abode."

"I pray you to send for her back again. I have that to say which nearly concerns her, and I would speak to you in her presence."

I noted the old man's brow grow dark. He hesitated—not wishing to offend me, and yet wishing still less to recall the girl.

"What is it you have to say, my lord? Can you not speak to me?"

"As you will; a very few words will suffice. Gonzalvo Saldanha, you have good old Spanish blood in your veins."

"My lord, though I am an humble armourer or trader, the name I bear is a proud one, and in olden time has echoed loud on many a bloody battle-field."

"Good. You know me; I am wealthy and noble——"

"As any in all Mexico, *senor*."

"I ask of you the hand of your daughter Dolora."

The old man was thunderstruck; such a possibility had never crossed his mind. Many noble suitors had dangled after his beautiful daughter; but, albeit most were far beneath me in rank, descent, and wealth, none had ever condescended to ask the hand of Dolora—for was she not a half-breed?

"My lord, you mock me," he said presently.

"As Heaven is my judge, I mean what I say! If the girl consents, I will make her my wife—mistress of my hacienda and broad domains."

I saw his face flush—his eye gleam. The old man was proud of his beautiful daughter, and the prospect of seeing her raised to high rank was very pleasing to the father's heart.

"*Senor*," he said, tremulously, "you do me too much honour. I will think. I fear it is impossible. I will speak to my daughter."

"Impossible! how?" I exclaimed.

"She is betrothed to her cousin Pedro."

"And is it possible," I said, haughtily, "that you can allow an Indian half-breed—for such his face bespeaks him—to stand in the way of your daughter's welfare?"

"Pedro is a desperate fellow, capable of any atrocity. I fear him. Dolora, too, is his slave; she trembles at the sound of his voice."

"Bah!" I said, contemptuously, "he will not dare molest her, if she becomes my wife. Should he attempt such a thing, I would have his ears nailed over my castle gates."

"He is vengeful, vindictive, and cruel. He loves Dolora passionately, in his own wild manner—the love of a wild beast. Thank Heaven! he is away now, and will not return for a month."

"Then all is well; speak to your daughter, my friend. Tomorrow I will call for an answer. Should she consent, I will at once place it out of the power of any to thwart my hopes. Ere a week passes I will wed her, and install her as mistress over my hacienda and servants."

I came back the next day, according to promise. Gonzalvo Saldana rose, and saluted me gravely.

"I will call my daughter," he said; "she will give you her answer. She knows my opinion and wishes on the subject."

I paced up and down the little shop while he was gone in a state of wild excitement. My heart beat fast, and I felt the hot blood rush to my face when I heard the rustle of her dress as she entered. Another moment, and she stood before me, her father holding her hand.

"Dolora," he said, "I have told you the offer the senor has honoured you by making; he awaits your answer."

She did not raise her eyes, but kept them bent on the ground. Her face was deadly pale—her whole attitude and appearance that of a marble statue. I could scarce see her lips move, or hear the words she murmured.

"The senor does me too much honour; since he thinks me worthy to share his high rank, it is not for me to refuse."

"Then you consent, dearest Dolora?" I cried, passionately.

"I consent," she said, with cold impassibility of voice and demeanour.

Then she glided away, and vanished from my sight like a beautiful vision.

That day week I married her in the cathedral, and bore her away to my home. I was deeply concerned at her strange behaviour—so cold, impassible, and indifferent, yet withal respectful and obedient.

My servants and retainers lined the courtyard of my hacienda as I led my bride into her future home. I paused on the steps, and turning to the assembled crowd, took my wife by the hand, and addressed them.

"My faithful friends, retainers, men-at-arms, and servants, behold in this lady your mistress, and fail not to yield to her the same fealty and homage as you would to myself."

Then I led her to the magnificent suite of apartments I had caused to be prepared for her. When we were alone, she turned to me, looked me full in the face, and with tears starting to her beautiful eyes, which she strove in vain to repress, spoke:—

"Senor—husband, I have wedded you; I will always strive to do my duty as a good wife should. I will pray to the blessed saints to make me love you. I do not love you; I think I never shall."

Imagine my grief and dismay at these words of my beautiful young wife.

"Dolora—dear Dolora!" I cried, "do not say so! Is it possible I am so unfortunate as to be an object of dislike? I never dreamt of this. I was vain enough to believe that you looked on me with some little favour."

"At first I did so, my lord. But you did not go the way to woo and win a maiden's heart. My father wished me to marry you; I have done so, but I cannot love you. My soul recoils from the thought of being sold like a slave."

"Sold, Dolora?"

"Ay! sold to gratify my father's ambition and your fancy—perchance a passing fancy."

"Not so, Dolora. I swear I will dearly love you! Your wish with me shall be law; you shall be mistress not only over all my possessions, but over myself. It is I who will be your slave, to win your love."

"I may be mistress of all you say, but I am not mistress of my own heart."

There was no trace of anger in her manner, only sadness and melancholy. Bitterly I regretted my precipitancy, in not having first striven to win her love before making her my wife.

Time passed on. I strove by every means in my power to render Dolora's life happy; I devoted myself entirely to her. As I had promised, her lightest wish was law. I purchased a country-house for her father, surrounded him with all that man's heart could wish, and even strove for a patent of nobility for him. Gradually I had the satisfaction of seeing my sweet wife's reserve wear off. I saw she was not insensible to my deep and long-continued devotion.

One morning I stood with her on the threshold of our home,

about to bid her farewell for a few days. I had business that would detain me in the capital for a short while.

For the first time she raised her sweet face to mine, and, unsolicited, kissed my cheek.

"Dear lord, do not be long away; I shall be so dull alone."

I clasped her in my arms.

"Dearest Dolora!" I cried, "is it possible that you are learning to love me?"

"I do not know," she murmured; "I hope so."

That day dated a new era in my existence. I had broken down the barrier of reserve between us, and might now hope to possess my bride's heart. Full of hope and love, I shortened my visit to the city, and hurried back. Dolora ran to meet me; but as I caught her in my arms I observed that she looked pale and haggard, and there was a wild light in her beautiful eyes, whose meaning I could not at that time read.

"Dolora, my sweet, trembling dove, what is it ails you?"

"My cousin Pedro has been here. He has just returned from a hunting excursion, and learned yesterday for the first time that I was married."

"Pedro!" I exclaimed, "what did he want?"

"He wished to see me. I refused to see him without your consent. Then he sent me a letter; it is here."

She handed me a piece of paper with a coarse, almost illegible, scrawl thereon. It ran thus:—

"Dolora,—I must and will see you. I bid you beware, false one, how you thwart me. If you value your own safety, or the life of the proud noble, your husband—(may he be for ever accursed!)—you will receive me.—PEDRO."

"What shall I do?" she asked, piteously. "I am so afraid of him. You know not his desperate, ungovernable disposition."

I thought for a moment; then a sudden resolve possessed me. I would show my implicit confidence in my young wife, and dismiss all jealous fears and unworthy suspicions.

"Dolora," I said, gravely, "my love for you is only equalled by my reliance on your prudence and honour. I give you permission to act as you think best."

"Thank you, dear lord. I will see my cousin; I think it best."

I bowed gravely, and was about to leave her, when she ran up to me, threw her arms about my neck, and embraced me.

"Dear husband, I am beginning to love you. You are so noble, and good, and kind, I cannot help it."

How my heart thrilled at the words!

Pedro came that evening, and at her request remained for the evening meal. She introduced me to him as her husband, and I noticed that her voice trembled as she pronounced the words. The young man bowed in sullen silence, and took his place at the table. I felt a strange dread and repugnance to this man. More than once I caught his eyes on my face; he instantly avoided my look, but in that moment I read an expression of deadly malignity which sent a chill to my heart. It was not fear—at least, for myself—but I dreaded him for Dolora's sake.

However, I hoped that in time he would become reconciled to the situation, and when his first rage and mortification wore off, would cease to cause me anxiety and alarm.

He came again and again, and was always received with hospitality. His demeanour grew gradually less sullen, and I began to congratulate myself.

One day, after my return from a hunting excursion, my faithful old steward, Rodrigues, called me on one side.

"My good lord, pardon an old servant for making so bold as to speak on such a topic, but my eyes have long been open, and I have seen much that greatly concerns me."

"What is it, Rodrigues? Speak out."

Still he hesitated, and it was with difficulty I could prevail on him to speak.

"My lady, senor, and her cousin—this Pedro."

A jealous pang shot through my heart.

"Ha! what mean you?—not that my wife——"

"No, no, senor; I believe her ladyship is a good and faithful wife. Still, I see much to cause me disquiet. She fears him; he thrusts himself on her at all hours when you are away; his temper is ungovernable. I frequently hear him threaten her, and I see her in tears."

"Now, by all the saints!" I cried, angrily, "I will not bear this. My dear wife shall not be subject to this fellow's insolence. Is he here now?"

"He is with my lady."

"Go tell him I wish to speak with him."

In a few minutes Pedro was standing before me, defiant—scowling, looking a very fiend.

"Señor Pedro," I said, with as much calmness as I could assume, "I have weighed the matter well, and I have come to the conclusion that it is best you should no longer visit here. I had thought and hoped that you would have got over your boyish passion for your cousin, my wife, and that when your natural mortification wore off, you might have been to her as a brother. I regret it is not so. I cannot allow my wife to be made unhappy, and therefore request you will no more visit here, or attempt to see her except in my presence."

"Boyish passion, proud noble!" he exclaimed. "Call you a love such as mine, fostered from infancy, a boyish passion? I was brought up to consider Dolora as my future wife, and but for you, with your accursed wealth, she would now have been mine. Aye, and she shall yet be mine, if I wade through your blood to reach her. She loves you not; she loves me. She has sworn to be mine. I go now, but not for ever. Tremble, coward! lest in one day you lose both your life and your wife!"

"Now, by heavens!" said I, clapping my hand to my sword, "I will not bear this insolence. Begone, or I will order my servants to cast you forth."

With one look of intense and eternal hate he strode away.

The apartment where I was commanded a view of a beautiful lake, on the banks of which I had built a boat-house. I saw him go down there, and entering his canoe, paddle swiftly away to the opposite shore. For a long time I saw no more of my rival—my enemy; and the bloom again appeared on Dolora's cheek, and again was heard her merry laughter, which his presence had dispelled.

Time passed; and though I hoped and tried to believe I possessed my wife's affections, strange misgivings haunted me—her manner was so strange. I often caught her in tears, nor could I elicit any reasons from her for her grief.

Rodrigues informed me that Pedro had been seen lurking about the neighbourhood. I was filled with alarm, but knew not how to act. I bade my wife be cautious, and not to venture out alone. She implored me to have confidence in her, and she would act for the best.

One afternoon I returned unexpectedly from the city. My wife, I was told, had gone out a few minutes previously, and presently I saw her from the window walking down the path to the lake. As I watched her, I became aware of a boat approaching across the water from the opposite shore, and soon I recognised

Pedro as the solitary occupant. He rowed straight to the boat-
20 se, and I saw him leap ashore. Dolora was walking in that
rection. An agonizing thought seized me—my wife was false
to me, and she was about to grant a secret interview to her cousin!

Burning with rage, I buckled on my sword, and sallied out. I
walked quickly and silently, and reached the bank of the lake
close to the boat-house. I heard the voices of my wife and enemy,
he speaking loudly, imperiously; she imploringly—her words
nearly undistinguishable from the sobs that accompanied them.

Rage and hate burned in my heart. I could see through some
interstices in the wall of the building all that passed—could hear
every word. They were both standing in a large flat-bottomed
boat, alongside which his canoe was moored.

"Dolora, I tell you it shall be so. My preparations are all made.
You swore years ago to be mine, and now I compel you to keep
your oath."

"No, no, Pedro; I cannot—I will not. I was then unmarried;
now a great gulf separates us."

"I care not," he replied; "you told me, when first I saw you
after your marriage, that you did not love this proud Spaniard—
that my image was still treasured in your heart."

"Yes, yes; but as a dear friend—a brother."

"No, no; I require more. Dolora, you shall be mine. What care
I for an empty ceremony—a few idle words spoken by a dotard
priest? You do not love this man whom you call husband, and
you love me. I claim you! Come now, at once; step into my
boat, and in five minutes we will be beyond pursuit. Once on the
other side of the lake, I am safe. Scores of trusty companions—
Indians—await me there. I am their chief. You shall be my
forest queen."

He endeavoured to take her hand and lead her to his canoe. I
ground my teeth with rage, but waited.

"No, Pedro, I will not go. You are wrong; I do love my hus-
band. Once I thought I did not, but I was wrong. His uniform
kindness, his deep love for me, his noble, honourable nature, have
conquered. It was but pique, and a girl's wounded vanity at being
won without being wooed, which led me to think that I loved him
not. I do love him with my whole heart and soul, and no other
man can ever have a place in my affections."

How my heart bounded with joy at these words! How con-
temptible now seemed my unworthy suspicions!

What happened next seems to me like a dreadful vision.

Pedro gave vent to a savage cry like that of a wild beast, as he heard this avowal, so fatal to his hopes. I saw him seize her in his arms. She shrieked aloud, "Mercy!—mercy!"

"Mine—mine, traitress! by force, if in no other way."

He bore her towards his canoe. Again her piercing shrieks rang out on the quiet air. I bounded from my concealment, and, sword in hand, leaped into the boat. To tear her from his ruffian grasp was but the work of an instant.

"Draw, scoundrel—traitor—accursed mongrel! and defend your life!" I shouted.

Instantly our two swords clashed together. His was a short Mexican *machete*, mine the long blade fashioned by my wife's father, and bearing her name. The steel blades hissed, clashed, and twined like two angry serpents for a moment or two; then I got under his guard, and, nerved by rage, drove the blue steel right through his body, the hilt thumping against his chest.

I withdrew the weapon, and with a deep gurgling groan he fell to the earth.

"Accursed miscreant! you have met your just fate."

The red blood rushed in torrents to his mouth, and choked his gasping cries.

"O God! you have killed him!" cried Dolora, distractedly wringing her hands.

After the most furious transports of rage, there usually comes a reaction. I soon knelt in pity beside the dying man. I wiped the blood from his lips, the death-sweat from his brow, and dashed water on his face.

"Pedro, you are dying; you rushed on your fate. May God have mercy on you!" I said.

"Dying—yes, dying, señor," he gurgled. "Your arm is true and strong. If you have any mercy, let me speak to Dolora; let her receive my last breath."

I arose, my heart full of compassion for the man I had slain.

"Dolora, attend to your cousin," I said. "I would summon assistance, but that I am surgeon enough to know it is useless; my sword has passed through his breast and out of the back. He has not many moments to live."

Dolora, kneeling, his head in her lap, and herself weeping bitterly, sought to soothe his dying moments.

"Oh, Pedro, Pedro! how could you be so wicked? God's ven-

geance has overtaken you; pray for forgiveness. See, here is a crucifix; kiss it, Pedro. May the saints and the blessed Virgin intercede for you!"

I had turned away, not wishing to disturb my dying foe's last moments. Suddenly I heard a wild cry, followed by a shriek from Dolora.

Pedro, with a last convulsive effort, started to his feet, and possessed himself of his short sword, while with his left arm he grasped Dolora.

"Mine—mine!" he shouted, with a howl like that of a demon of hell. "Mine in death, accursed Spaniard! Thus do I win my love, and rob you of your wife! Mine in death—mine for ever! Die, Dolora!—die, traitress!—accompany me!"

O God! the horror of that moment! Before I could reach him, he had plunged his short blade twice into her breast—drove it in, as I had done to him, up to the hilt.

"Ha! ha! ha! She is mine!"

Then the hot blood rushing to his mouth choked him, and he fell gasping in the bottom of the boat.

I caught my wife in my arms. Her life-blood spurted all over me. I knew she was dying.

"Dolora—Dolora, speak to me! for God's sake, speak to me!"

She turned her soft eyes, from which the light of life was fast fading away, on my face.

"Adieu! I am dying, my lord—my life—my love! I love—I have always loved you. It was but wicked pride which once caused me to deny it. Kiss me, my husband—kiss me!"

I pressed my lips passionately to hers. A deep sigh escaped her, and all was dark. I held in my arms the lifeless body of Dolora, the armourer's daughter—my true and faithful wife.

XI.

THE SPANISH DANCER.

AN ADVENTURE IN HAVANNAH.



I NEED not specify the circumstances which caused me to find myself in Boston city one fine morning, without money and with no means of getting any, except by shipping.

So ship I did, on board a clipper brig called the *Turtle Dove*, as second mate. She carried a crew of fourteen seamen, whilst the captain, first and second mates, boatswain, carpenter, cook, and steward, made up twenty-one in all.

She was bound, I was informed, "to Havannah, for orders."

At the time, I did not stop to consider what a strange and unusual voyage this was on which we were about to start. I soon found out, however, that this was a very strange vessel; and before we sailed out of Boston harbour, I was perfectly well aware that a mystery enveloped her.

From some word let drop about shares, I at first thought there was some idea of a whaling voyage. As I then felt, I did not care much where I went,—the fact is, I had fallen desperately in love with a pretty actress at Boston Museum Theatre, and she had jilted me for a Yankee dry-store keeper.

By degrees the true nature of our voyage oozed out. To my astonishment, I found I was supposed to know all about it. It appeared, indeed, that the mission of the *Turtle Dove* was a matter of notoriety about the seafaring portion of the town. As it happened, however, I had been doing the grand at the east of Boston city, where I spent my money like a king as long as it

lasted; and when my dream of love exploded and my purse become empty all at once, I availed myself of my seafaring knowledge and my previous certificates, and shipped as second mate. I happened to mention that I had sailed with Black-ball Bob, on hearing which the skipper seemed quite content and shipped me at once.

But when our voyage commenced, I found that I had made a great mistake. The brig was owned by some sanctimonious Boston merchants, and was going out—for what purpose do you imagine? No other than to obtain a cargo of slaves and run them over to the island of Cuba. There was an agent of the owners in Havannah, and we were going there for final arrangements, and to ship stores and water.

I had no proof of all this, but discovered it gradually, bit by bit, in the course of conversation, and by hearing the skipper and mate talk.

I found in a day or two that this Yankee brig with the amiable name was a “floating hell.”

The skipper never got drunk in harbour or ashore, on which he greatly prided himself; but made up for this deprivation by being drunk the whole time without exception when at sea.

He was nicknamed Black Jack, and was an uproarious bully, as also was the mate. So intolerable was the life on board, that I firmly made up my mind to leave when we arrived at Havannah. The fact of my being certain she was going on a slaving expedition was quite a sufficient justification without anything else.

The skipper had not attempted to strike me, though he had the mate, who, however, knowing his peculiarities, chose to put up with it. I may here say that the voyage, if successful, would be an extremely lucrative one. Each foremast hand was to receive negroes to the value of nearly a hundred and fifty pounds sterling, and a chance of making more in other ways.

The captain knocked some of the men about in a most shameful manner, and when I expostulated, threatened to serve me the same. Now, I was determined not to come to open war at sea, but to leave it till we arrived at Havannah, and then state my intention of going ashore.

We arrived at Havannah, and I stated my intention, upon which the skipper produced a revolver and threatened to blow my brains out. He was mad drunk, and the vessel was piloted in by the mate.

Next day I demanded permission to go ashore to see the consul. This was abruptly refused. The skipper called me a mutinous scoundrel, and said he would disrate me and send me before the mast; whereupon I told him I would go before the mast, and did not intend to serve as second mate. He said, "A good thing too; I was not fit for the post." Accordingly I took my chest forward in the forecastle—not, be it understood, with the intention of serving as a seaman, or indeed at all, but to see how the land lay there, and whether I could get any, and if so how many, to join me in taking a boat by force and leaving this infernal brig.

I found seven willing to act with me; the other seven were not to be trusted. Most of them were incorrigible ruffians; liked the nature of the voyage, "black-birding," as they called it, and looked forward to the rich booty on their return in two or three months' time.

In the forecastle, then, we were eight against seven—that is, including myself. But there were the captain, the mate, the boatswain, the steward, and cook, all powerful, determined men, on the other side, in addition to the rest of the crew. This brought the odds heavily against us.

Nevertheless, I laid my plans, and proceeded to unfold them to those who were going into the affair with me.

I proposed to watch an opportunity, and secure the captain and as many as we could when all were in the cabin together. I hoped thus to cage mate, steward, cook, and Black Jack himself. This I intended to effect by putting the companion-hatch on and blocking it up by water-casks, etc. Thus taking them unawares, I judged we could easily overpower the rest. I would ensure that the long-boat should be towing alongside; and we could toss our things in and quietly run her ashore.

"But," objected some one, "it will be mutiny, won't it?"

"Of course it will; but who cares, if it were high treason? Not I, for one."

This plan was agreed on, and that very evening fixed for carrying it out. No sign was given, but all remained orderly and quiet. Doubtless the captain thought that his fury and his oaths had frightened us into submission. He was slightly mistaken. Evening came. The sun went down, and the anchor watches were set at eight bells. At nine o'clock (two bells) the attempt was to be made.

I had arranged everything, and stationed my men in readiness.

The captain, the mate, and the steward were in the cabin, seated at the table, taking their evening grog; the cook was in the pantry. I was usually with them at this time, before I had voluntarily gone forward. The boatswain and carpenter lived in a small cabin by themselves, down the lower forecastle; while the crew lived in a deck-house,—what the Yankees call a hurricane-house,—between the masts.

They were in their berth, and also, fortunately for us, as it seemed, the boatswain had invited three of the crew down, and was treating them with grog.

This, with the party in the cabin, would make up nine. If we could secure them, we should have but little trouble with the rest,

Two bells struck.

Instantly I and two others clapped on the companion-hatches, and quickly rolled a water-cask on top, and there lashed it.

Then we piled hen-coops, cordage, spars, everything at hand, on the skylight, so that it could not be forced off. At the same time the same thing was done forward, and the boatswain, carpenter, and three men were caged. Two of the remaining men were in their berths and were secured without trouble; and then the rest made no resistance, and the ship was ours.

The long-boat was alongside, and we hastened into the hurricane-house, where the crew lived, that the men might get their things and throw them into the boat. I had previously removed everything I had of value in the cabin—which was not much, by the way—and brought it forward. We were on the point of leaving the house and repairing to the boat, when we heard the voice of the captain shouting.

Those we had confined in the cabin had broken out, and, led by the captain and mate, were about to attack us. It appears that the mate had climbed out of the after-cabin window, gained the deck, and removed the obstacles, while we were busy in the hurricane-house, thinking all secure.

Then he had done the same to the forecastle-hatch, and thus freed the boatswain, carpenter, and the three men. The next moment the mate and captain dashed into the hurricane-house.

The mate came first, with a lantern (for it was dark as pitch) in one hand, and a belaying-pin in the other. After him came the captain with a revolver; then the boatswain and carpenter.

As we had begun the affair, we were determined to see it out and fight. We were all armed with knives or pistols, which was

fortunate for us, but disastrous to the other party. The mate dashed in first, as I have said.

"Seize them!" he cried, "and handcuff them, the scoundrels!"

The words were barely out of his mouth when the lantern was dashed from his hands and extinguished, and he himself felled to the ground by a heavy blow from a man who stood behind the door watching for the first who should enter. Down went the mate, with a howl of mingled rage and pain, his revolver firing off as he fell. He continued to fire, however, as he lay on the ground, till all the barrels were empty.

The captain was the next who entered, and he also was struck down by the same man. Now, however, the boatswain, carpenter, and others rushed in, and a fearful hand-to-hand conflict with knives, pistols, and revolvers ensued.

When all were inside, some one closed the door—which slid in a groove and did not work on hinges.

Then we were in utter darkness, fighting desperately. I tell you, my boy, it was a "high old time." Oaths, cries, the occasional crash of a revolver, and the trampling of feet, and the noise made by the combatants as they struggled and fell about in the darkness, were heard on all sides.

I received a heavy blow on the head from some one, and fell to the ground on my face. I hastened to get up again, and noticed, as I did so, that the deck was quite wet—with blood, of course.

And now a piercing shriek rings forth. Some unfortunate wretch has received a stab from a sheath-knife, and that is his cry of agony—perhaps his death-cry. It was quite close to me, and although I could not see in the darkness, I could hear every motion. I could make out that the wounded man was seeking to defend himself—retreating in order to avoid another blow from his enemy. I heard the latter rush forward with a furious oath, stumbling over a chest as he did so. Then I knew that the two men closed again. I heard them struggling together for a few seconds—and then could distinguish plainly a dull heavy blow.

Another dreadful shriek!

"Mercy, mercy!" cried the wounded man. "Ah! O Lord!"

Again another stab, and he fell heavily to the ground, where he lay groaning. Meanwhile the fight raged with great fury all around. The struggling forms of the combatants were tumbling and falling all over the place as they contended together. No more

fatal shots were heard, as the pistol barrels were all empty; but fight was waged with knives and belaying-pins.

Suddenly, I felt myself attacked by an enemy whom I could feel and hear, but not see. I had no knife, and all the barrels of my pistol had been fired.

I defended myself as well as I could, but stumbling over one of the seamen's chests in the utter darkness, I felt my assailant, who had in his hand a heavy weapon, raining blows on me as I endeavoured to rise.

In my efforts I laid my hand on the chest which had caused me to fall. I felt something hard and cold.

With a cry of joy I seized it and attacked my adversary in turn. It was an axe, and aiming a blow at haphazard, I cut my enemy down.

At this moment the door was opened, either by accident or design, and the moonlight streamed in. Almost instantly, however, the door was again closed, and all was pitchy darkness as before.

During that moment, however, I had been enabled to take a rapid survey of the state of affairs. I saw five or six forms lying on the deck, either dead or badly wounded. I saw also the figures of four or five men huddled up in one corner of the place. These were our antagonists, and I perceived, during the few moments that the door was opened, that several of them were loading their revolvers again. No sooner was the door closed than I dashed forward, axe in hand, to attack this group. It was now a struggle of life and death. I felt that we must win or die.

The shout I gave as I rushed forward was answered, and though I could not see, I knew that others were working in concert with me.

As I went forward, swinging the axe around my head, there was a flash and a sharp report. I staggered back, for I had been shot in the shoulder.

Only for a moment, however; then I again rushed to the attack. Down went my enemies like skittle-pins before my terrible weapon. I could not see the effect of my blows, but knew that I must have done a good deal of damage.

Several pistol-shots followed the one by which I had been wounded, but none took effect—at least on me. For a few minutes more a struggle was kept up; not so fiercely as before, however; and then the uproar almost ceased, and men began to call each other by name.

I distinguished that it was mostly our party which did so, and gathered from the fact that the others had been worsted. Indeed, our antagonists gave no signs of their presence otherwise than by groans.

All were placed *hors de combat*. That last attack of mine with the axe, seconded by the others, had done terrible execution, and finished the affair.

"Open the door!" some one cried.

It was done; and again the moon streamed in on the scene.

I gave a hasty glance round, then hurried on deck, glad to get away.

In that one quick glance I saw quite sufficient to cause a shudder. The deck of the small place was covered with the prostrate forms of the wounded. One or two lay over chests, as they had fallen in the fight.

I saw all this, and hurried away, shouting, "To the long-boat!"

She was lying alongside, as we had left her a couple of hours before. In the course of a couple of minutes we were all in her. All, I said; not all, however, for there were but five of us now. We waited a little, and shouted to the others. No answer.

"Dead, I reckon, or badly hurt," said one, coolly. "It's no use waiting; we must look out for ourselves now, for there'll be a thundering shine about this affair."

So saying, the speaker cast off the painter, and two of our party, the only two unwounded, seated themselves at the oars, and rowed rapidly away from the vessel.

We did not intend to land at the town of Havannah, for we judged, and not without reason, that should we do so, our arrest would be prompt and certain.

Four out of the five were badly wounded, while the remaining one was splashed with blood.

We accordingly rowed for a small creek about three miles above the town, where we ran the boat on shore.

After resting for a time, we all got into the sea up to our waists, and proceeded to wash the blood off our faces, hands, and clothes.

This done, we again got into the boat, and rolling ourselves up in the sail, sought a few hours' sleep.

At daybreak we again rose, and held a council as to what was to be done.

We walked along shore to the jutting headland which formed one extremity of the creek, and looked out towards the shipping in the bay, and the brig in particular.

We saw what caused us no little alarm. The brig was surrounded by a great crowd of boats, which continually rowed backwards and forwards, as if in a commotion. We noticed that her decks were crowded, and could distinguish Spanish soldiers on board. We could also distinguish by the flags several government police-boats.

Some of these were rowing about from ship to ship. Doubtless they were searching for us.

Next we noticed that some of the boats rowed in towards the shore, and then commenced slowly skirting the land. They were evidently searching to find the place where we had landed.

No time was to be lost. In the course of their search they would soon come upon the creek, and if they found the boat, they would know we had landed there.

By my orders the boat was laden with stones, and rowed into deep water. Then the plug was pulled out, and she was allowed to sink, those who rowed her out swimming on shore.

Thus we had destroyed all trace of our landing, and might hope to escape capture. Though justified in my own mind in what I had done, I by no means felt sure that the Spanish authorities would look at it in the same light. Therefore it was not at all advisable to be captured.

Leaving the banks of the creek, we proceeded half a mile inland, and hid ourselves in the brushwood, in such a position as to command a view of the bay.

All day long, boats were rowing to and fro, and several even entered and explored the creek where we had landed, thus proving the wisdom of the step we had taken in sinking the boat.

We remained concealed in the brushwood, not daring to venture out. As evening approached, however, we determined to leave our hiding-place. We arranged to separate, each going his own way and trusting to chance, as it would be madness for us all to go together in a body.

Four out of the five determined to make their way overland to the seaport of Matanzas, distant about thirty miles.

I resolved to make my way to the town of Havannah, trusting to my good fortune to clear me of this, as it had of many other scrapes. Accordingly, as the sun went down, we left the brush-

wood. We exchanged a shake of the hand all round, and bade each other "Good-bye"—probably for ever.

I was suffering great pain from my wounded shoulder; for the bullet was still buried in the flesh, and inflammation had already set in.

Painfully, wearily, I made my way towards the town, halting at every place where I could find water, in order to bathe my shoulder, the pain from which was so intense as to make me turn at times quite faint.

I had arrived on the outskirts of the town, when I found myself quite weak from loss of blood. I knew that if I did not take some rest and refreshment I should be unable to proceed.

I had not intended to enter any house along the road, considering it unsafe; but my sufferings were so acute that I could not resist. I entered a wine-shop by the road-side, and seating myself in a small cushioned chair near the door, called for a bottle of wine.

Scarcely was I seated and the wine brought, than a party of Spanish sailors entered.

My attention was riveted by the very first words they uttered.

They were part of the boat's crew of a Spanish man-of-war, and had been engaged all day in searching for us.

I gathered from their conversation (for I understand Spanish) that a reward was offered for our apprehension, and that the severest punishment was in store for us. Orders had been conveyed to all the seaports in the island, to prevent our embarking; and the Spaniards again and again expressed their belief that we had all made for Matanzas.

I also gathered from their conversation that several parties had been despatched overland, in order to capture the mutineers, and that it was considered certain the object would be effected before the next night.

Watching my opportunity, I beckoned the attendant, settled for what I had had, and stole quietly out.

"So, so," I thought, "it is fortunate I determined to make for Havannah instead of Matanzas. I fear that the others are doomed to capture, from what I hear."

I was now at the outskirts of the town of Havannah, and the question became—What should I do? Where should I go?

I had money, but I dared not go to an hotel. I thought for some time, without being able to come to a satisfactory conclusion, and then determined to push on, and trust to my good fortune.

The outskirts of the town of Havannah are composed of handsome residences, surrounded by orange groves and gardens. It was not quite dark, and as the high road was somewhat thronged with people, who gazed strangely and suspiciously at my singular and blood-stained appearance, I left it, and made my way as best I could across these gardens. My wounded shoulder was now dreadfully painful. The wine had for a time given me strength, but I now felt its effects in increased pain. My shoulder throbbed, and the bleeding, which had stopped, recommenced. I grew quite faint from pain, and leaned against a tree for support. I grew dizzy, and the whole landscape swam before my eyes. I felt myself rapidly falling, and knew that I was about to faint, perhaps never again to recover my consciousness.

"Good Heavens!" I thought; "and is it thus I am to perish—alone—uncared for?"

I saw a light shining from a house window, about a hundred yards further on. It was the house to which the garden I was in belonged.

Collecting all my energy, I made an effort, and staggered forward in the direction of the house.

As I approached I could discover the form of a woman on the balcony. My eyes were dim, and I could not tell with certainty whether she was young or old.

"Surely," I thought, "she will take pity on me, be she who she may."

And with this thought I struggled on, each moment getting nearer to the house, and each moment also becoming weaker and fainter.

Arrived within a few yards of my goal, my strength utterly deserted me. I fell against a tree, in passing striking my wounded shoulder. A cry of pain escaped me, and then everything faded from my sight, and all was darkness. I had fallen fainting to the ground.

When I recovered my senses, I found myself stretched on a couch.

A woman, an old negress, was bending over me, bathing my head and wounded shoulder, while another female was flitting noiselessly about the room.

"Is he better, nurse?" asked the latter; "is he recovering?"

"Yes, miss, he's coming round now, fast enough."

"What a dreadful bullet-wound! and see, too, how h's head is cut about!"

This was true enough. I had received several blows on the head, of which, however, I had thought nothing in comparison with the pistol-shot.

The other female stooped by the side of the couch and laid her cool hand on my forehead. I had closed my eyes, and as I felt the soft pressure of her hand on my forehead, I said in Spanish—

“Thanks, lady—a thousand thanks.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the lady, “he speaks Spanish—he understands us! After all, he is a Spaniard, although I thought him an American or an Englishman.”

“Yes—yes, lady,” I muttered, “I am an Englishman.”

“But you speak Spanish?”

“A little.”

“How were you wounded, and how came you in my garden?”

“How was I wounded?—I will tell you by-and-by. Now I feel faint.”

The truth of the matter was, I was at a loss to explain the affair, for I did not know how my hostess would receive the truth if I were to tell it her.

“Yes, yes, poor fellow,” she said, gazing compassionately at me; “you are faint and ill, of course. Rest yourself; the surgeon will be here presently to attend to your wound.”

The old negress poured me out a drink into a glass, which I eagerly drained off.

It was an acid drink, containing a cordial, which produced an immediate and wonderful effect. Looking around the room in which I was, I discovered it was on the first floor, and opened on to a balcony, probably the one where I had first seen the female figure before I fainted.

I now proceeded to survey this lady, who had, like a good Samaritan, succoured me and saved me from death.

The room was well lighted, and I saw at once that she was young and handsome. The more I gazed, the more I became impressed by her great beauty.

An exceedingly graceful, supple figure, surmounted by a head and neck of exquisite proportions. A profusion of beautiful black hair, two large flashing black eyes, beautiful teeth, and faultless features. Such was the *tout ensemble* of my fair protectress.

Her dress was close-fitting, showing off her elegant figure to the best advantage. It was also after the Spanish fashion, the skirt descending very little below the knee. Thus I had the

opportunity of seeing as symmetrical a foot and ankle and as faultless a leg as it was ever my lot to see.

I had not the pleasure of gazing long on this sweet vision, for she shortly afterwards went away, leaving me in charge of the old negress. I know not whether the draught contained an opiate or not, but I shortly afterwards fell fast asleep.

When I awoke, I found, to my great surprise, that my wound had been dressed and strapped up.

It was broad daylight, and the sun was high in the heavens, so I knew I must have slept all night. I was quite alone, not a soul being in the room, nor could I hear anyone moving about.

I strove to rise, but was too weak, and the effort caused me so much pain that I was glad to fall back again. Looking around me, I saw by the side of the couch was placed a table, with wine and fruit on it, also a small silver hand-bell.

It was evident I was well cared for.

I took the bell and rang it gently. Scarcely had I done so than I heard a light step, and the same beautiful girl entered.

"Ah!" she said, with a smile, "you are awake then, dear Englishman."

"Awake, *senorita*?" I replied, "yes; and surely it must be about time—for it seems to me it must be quite noon."

"No matter; the sleep has done you good."

"A thousand thanks, lady, for your kindness to me. I assure you I shall always be grateful, and ready at all times to prove my gratitude. May I have the honour of knowing whom I address?" I continued; "who is this beautiful lady who has taken compassion on me?"

"Oh, certainly," she said, smiling; "they call me Cora Nina. I am only a poor dancer and actress at the theatre."

"Cora Nina! What a sweet name!—and a dancer, too; is it possible!"

"You speak as if you were surprised, or disappointed. Do you, then, despise me because I am a dancer?"

"Despise you, beautiful Cora! Heaven forbid!—I admire and adore you."

The girl blushed, and was, I thought, not altogether displeased.

"Ah! *senor*," she said, "you must not talk so—it is not right; besides, it is not good for your wound."

"Not talk!—how can I help it, in the presence of such a divinity?"

"Silence, *senor*," she said, playfully putting her hand on my lips.

I seized it, and kissed it.

She let me retain it a second or two, and then snatched it away, saying, laughingly, "On my word, *Senor Englishman*, you are a pretty invalid. If you go on thus when you are wounded and ill, you must be positively terrible when well!"

"Ah! do not say so. Do not let me think I could ever be terrible to you——"

"There, that will do—your face is getting quite flushed; you will be in a fever again directly. I expect the surgeon shortly, to see your wound, so do not excite yourself by talking."

So saying, she left the room, giving me a parting smile as she vanished. Yet, although she had gone, her fair form was still before my eyes. It seemed I could never tire of thinking of her and recalling to my memory each individual grace and beauty. I was infatuated with my lovely saviour. I felt it—knew it—and did not struggle against the feeling. Even as I again dropped off to sleep, the words "*Cora Nina*" lingered on my lips, and in my dreams her lovely shape flitted about my couch.

When next I awoke, she was standing by my bedside in company with a man. This was the surgeon, who forthwith proceeded to put me to great torture by dressing my wound.

Cora remained in the room the whole time, and at each exclamation of pain wrung from me by the somewhat rough handling of the doctor, a sympathetic cry would break from her fair lips.

"There, doctor, do pray be gentle with the poor boy. See how pale he is—see how he suffers."

The business of probing and dressing the wound being completed, the surgeon took his departure, and I was again alone with Cora Nina. Seating herself by my side, she with her own fair hands bathed my forehead, as she saw that I was faint from pain and weakness.

I said little, but tried to express my gratitude and devotion by my looks; nor was the fair Cora indifferent, at least, so I fancied.

What need to go on, and step by step repeat an oft-told tale? I grew better under the care of Cora. How could I repay her kindness—her devotion, otherwise than by an equal devotion?

Long before I was able to leave my couch I declared to Cora that I loved her deeply, passionately,—that I never had, nor would love another. The words might have been true or false, that is no matter; at the time, I believed what I said. I watched

the mantling blushes rise to her fair cheek, and saw her trembling with joy at my avowal. I drew her towards me, and she wept on my shoulder—not tears of grief.

“Cora, dear Cora, say you love me!”

“Love you!—Heaven knows that I do indeed love you!”

* * * * *

I quickly recovered my health and strength, and in a fortnight was able to leave the house for a stroll in the gardens.

It now became a question with me as to what I should do. Cora's affection for me seemed to increase each day in force. My will with her was law; my slightest wish attended to as though I were her master and she a slave.

What was I to do?—what could I do? Cora was young, beautiful, and fascinating; she loved me, and I loved her. What wonder, then, that I lingered on long after my convalescence, and basked in the smiles of the beautiful actress.

She was mine, heart and soul—she lived but in my presence. Doubtless, had I so chosen, I might have deceived her; but my soul revolted from an act so base, so ungrateful.

I made up my mind that I would marry her, and told her of my determination. Never shall I forget the transport of joy with which she welcomed my offer.

And so it was settled; we were to be married in the course of a month or two.

Now be it observed, that even after I was sufficiently well to get about, I never went into the town, but confined myself to the garden and immediate neighbourhood of her villa.

I explained to her my circumstances frankly—that I was not of age, but I should, on my majority, inherit a sum of five thousand pounds by my mother's settlement. With that and what she had saved, and what profit came, and what windfalls might come to me, we could live comfortably.

I was quite serious—all that time I intended to marry this beautiful girl and settle down.

Slowly, however, there arose clouds on the horizon of our summer sky. Cora had saved money—a very considerable sum, I can tell you—but still insisted on following her profession. I proposed that I should go to sea for a year or so, until I was of age, and then return to claim my bride; meanwhile I wished her to give up the theatrical profession, and live quietly at home. At first she said that she could not allow me to leave her. When I

explained to her, however, that I strongly objected to my future wife appearing in public for money, she was at first astonished, and then angry; at last she absolutely refused.

No, she would not leave the stage. I had known her first as Cora Nina, the dancer and actress, and as such had not thought her beneath my notice; why should I now affect to despise her profession? In vain I insisted and threatened by turns. In reply, she asked whether I had ever observed anything unbecoming in her conduct; whether I doubted her truth—her love for me—her honour and virtue? If I said so, she would never appear again or think of me either.

I could not have said so. She was, I believe, the rock of purity; her virtue was befitting Cæsar's wife—above suspicion. I told her frankly, that in that respect she was faultless.

"Then why should you ask me to relinquish a profession I love, while you, to feed your pride, go roaming about? No, no, I will not do it. I love the stage; I love admiration, applause; I am ambitious."

"Why do I wish you to do so?" I replied. "Because, Cora, I hope that though you love admiration and are ambitious, you love me more."

"You doubt that I love you?" she exclaimed, passionately. "Have I not given you sufficient proof?"

"I fear it is useless my arguing with you, Cora. Once again, I wish you to renounce the theatrical profession for love of me."

"No," she replied, decisively; "I must not—cannot—will not."

"Then you prefer to renounce me?"

Her eyes filled with tears, and throwing her arms around my neck, she wept.

The victory was almost won. I thought it was quite so. But when I was not present, her old love for her profession returned, and I now found that to dissuade her would be one continual struggle. I know not how it would have ended; but at this period an event occurred which quite changed the course of affairs.

I had now been on the island some three months, and was quite recovered from my wounds. I never ventured far away from the villa, or frequented any public thoroughfare. I heard casually that the pirates (so we were called) of the *Turtle Dove* had all been captured, save one, and now lay in Castle Muro, waiting to be tried. I knew something of Spanish justice and Spanish laws, and therefore held the thought of being arrested in great dread.

But when these dark clouds arose on the fair sky of our love, I grew reckless, and once or twice followed Nina into the verandah. One day we had a violent quarrel; I told her I would leave her, and she retorted by saying, that as I did not love her, I might do so. That evening, while sitting alone in the verandah, brooding over my wrongs, I became aware of a tumult below, and caught sight of Spanish uniforms. A few words I overheard convinced me that my retreat was discovered, and that they had come to arrest me. As they ascended to the first story, where I was, in order to search the house, I lowered myself down one of the balcony pillars, and ran like a deer. Fortunately, I was not seen, and escaped to the sea-shore.

But what to do now? Ah! that is indeed a question.

While walking along the beach, and debating this in my mind, I saw approaching me from the town a party of three sailors. I hastened to conceal myself. When they arrived opposite to me they commenced undressing. They had evidently come to bathe.

Now, I was attired in a very rich suit, in the Spanish fashion, which was a terrible misfortune, as in that garb I could not hope to escape by sea. What captain would, even if he were allowed, ship a fellow who looked as if he had just walked out from a masquerade ball?

One of the sailors placed his clothes under a bush quite close to where I lay concealed. I quickly made up my mind, and when he went into the water, watching my opportunity, I drew them towards me. To doff my own and don these was the work of a minute or so, and then I cautiously stole away.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature," I said to myself; "and besides, the suit I have left is worth ten times as much as this."

Notwithstanding my dangerous predicament, I could not refrain from laughing when I thought of the sailor's amazement when he found a rich suit of clothes in place of his own sea habiliments.

Togged out once more as a sailor, I boldly entered Havannah, asked for a sailors' boarding-house, where I stopped that night, and in the morning, having made the necessary inquiries, boldly sallied out.

In the pockets of the trousers I now had on, I found a tobacco-box, a knife, and a discharge from an American merchant-ship, in the name of ————. That was evidently the name of the sailor with whom I had changed clothes.

So behold me before the American consul.

"What do you want, my man?" said the clerk.

"Permission to ship."

"What's your name?"

I gave the name written on the discharge-note.

"What nation?"

"A citizen of the United States."

"Where's your discharge?"

I placed it on the table before him.

Then the necessary permission was given in writing, and having put the consul's signature away, I went to the shipping-office.

I was in luck again. Captain Butler, of the ship *George Turner*, bound for New York, was there engaging men. The ship was to sail immediately, and he was only waiting for three more hands.

Two more came in while I was waiting. Everything was in order; we all signed articles, and away we went down to the quay, to go on board.

As I passed down the street where was the American consul's office, I saw a group of sailors hurrying along towards the consulate. Recognising my own habiliments on one of them, I dived into a wine-shop, and saw the Dutch sailor with whom I had changed clothes rush in hot haste up the broad stone steps, doubtless full of his grievance—how he had been robbed of his clothes, his discharge, and other papers, and left in exchange a suit of long-shore togs.

In half an hour I was on board the *George Turner*; we hove the anchor up, set sail, and away we sailed down Bannoch Bay.

As we passed the town where I had reason to believe some of my less fortunate shipmates were imprisoned, I looked up at the frowning fortress, and pitying them, blessed my lucky stars.

Then my eyes swept back along the bay; I could just make out the pretty villa, half-hidden among the orange groves, where I had passed the last three months. I felt sad when I thought of Cora Nina, and what would be her feelings when she discovered that I had indeed gone.

However, to indulge in vain regrets was not a habit of mine.

"Adieu, Cora!" I said aloud, as though she could hear me—"adieu for ever!"

Then the *George Turner* hauled her wind, and passing round the headland, the villa in which I had been so happy was hidden from sight.

XII.

THE SUPERCARGO ;

OR, THE HAUNTED SHIP



"A SUPERCARGO!—so my owners have so little confidence in me, who have served them afloat, man and boy, for twenty years, that they must put a supercargo on board, to keep watch and guard over me—to act the part of spy, and report to them everything that goes on aboard the brig! Well, let them; but if I don't make the life of this whipper-snapper nephew of theirs a hell on earth, my name's not John Hawkins!"

Thus muttered, or rather growled, the skipper of the brig *Geraldine*, bound from Bristol, with a valuable assorted cargo, for the Gold Coast of Africa. A hard-featured, black, and forbidding looking man was John Hawkins, the captain. Wicked-looking grey eyes surmounted by gloomy brows, and a low forehead with many a deep furrow, bespoke a character ruthless, cruel, and determined. The bronze skin, tanned by many a day and night's exposure to the sun of the tropics and the fury of the gale, showed plainly that the life of John Hawkins had been passed on no bed of roses. Although his hair was iron-grey, his beard and whiskers were black as jet, and completely concealed the lower part of his face.

His tawny complexion, his beard, but perhaps more than all, his gloomy, cruel, and desperately determined nature, had procured him the *sobriquet* of "Black Jack." Whispers and rumours were rife among the crew of the desperate deeds of their captain. More than one man, it was said, had met a terrible death at his hand—

death to which there was no witness. One of the men who composed the crew had been told by a former shipmate of a narrow escape he had from death at the hands of Black Jack on a former voyage. This man stated that, one dark and stormy night, in the middle watch, he was at the helm. The vessel was under a press of canvas, and steered wildly; nor could all his efforts prevent her yawing two or three points on each side of her course. Suddenly the captain appeared on deck, in his shirt and trousers only, and with a furious oath desired him to keep the ship on her course. Bob Barton—for such was the man's name—replied that it was impossible, and—somewhat foolishly, knowing the terrible temper of Hawkins—said, that if he wanted the ship to be steered straight, he had better ease her by taking in sail.

“You precious hound! how dare you dictate to me as to my duty?” shouted the captain, bounding towards him.

A furious back-handed blow sent Bob Barton flying from the wheel, and down on the hencoops to leeward. Now, Bob was a powerful and a brave man, and not relishing this treatment, he, in his own words, “up and tackled him.” The struggle was short, for if Bob was strong, the strength of Black Jack was herculean. In less than a minute the sailor was powerless in the terrible grip of the skipper. The latter took him by the neck and one leg, and exerting his terrible strength, deliberately pitched him overboard into the black and boiling waves.

The mate, and the watch on deck, were forward at the time, taking a pull at the jib-sheet, so that none were witnesses of the deed.

The ship at the time was labouring and rolling heavily. Bob Barton had been pitched overboard on the lee-side. Fortunately for him, a spare spar was lashed outside beneath the mizen chain, and the next roll of the ship enabled him to grasp it, and crawl into the chains. He heard the intended murderer shout for “another man at the helm,” and heard him explain, in a few gruff words, that Bob Barton had fallen overboard.

Then the skipper went below, and Bob, bruised and bleeding, crawled forward to the forecastle.

He did not venture to show himself on deck till next day. When Black Jack saw him, he looked at first a little astonished, but merely growled forth—

“Thought you were overboard for mutinous conduct. Mind your duty, and let me have none of your cheek for the future.”

And that was all the notice that Black Jack ever took of the affair.

At the next port at which they touched, Bob Barton deserted, not caring to sail again with Captain John Hawkins.

Such was the story of Bob Barton, related by him to Bill Flaxman, one of the crew of the *Geraldine*.

The "blue-peter" was flying at the brig's mast-head, the cable was hove short, and the fore-topsail loosed from the gaskets. All was ready for putting to sea, and they waited only for the supercargo to come on board. Soon a boat was descried putting off from the shore, and the skipper, recognising the supercargo, gave the word, "Man the windlass;" and in ten minutes the anchor is a-weigh.

The boat is now alongside, and from it step on the deck the supercargo, Edward Gale, a young man of six-and-twenty; one of the owners, Mr. Bennet of Bristol; and his only daughter, Geraldine, after whom the brig was named.

While the topsails were being sheeted home and hoisted, the owner drew the skipper on one side to give him final directions, while Ned Gale, his nephew, was in earnest conversation with his fair cousin, Geraldine. Apparently they seemed to be taking an affectionate leave of one another, for the young man held the girl's hand, while a tear might be observed stealing down her cheek.

"It will not be for long, Geraldine, dearest—five or six months at the outside, and then—then I shall come back and claim my own, my beautiful cousin. Is it not so?" he asked drawing her gently and unresistingly towards him.

Geraldine cast down her eyes, and as plainly *looked* "yes" as possible.

Suddenly she started, and, with a terrified look, exclaimed—

"Oh, Edward, how scowlingly Captain Hawkins is regarding us! I never saw so bitter or so black a look as the one which he just now shot towards us. Pray be careful, for I am sure he is your enemy."

"My enemy?" was the reply, in a tone of surprise; "why so? I have never done him any injury."

"No, perhaps not; but do you know that on his return from this voyage and the last, he has tried to press his attentions on me? You know he was often at our house, and my father enjoined me to be particularly civil to him, for that he was one of the best captains he had in his service. Of course I saw a great

deal of him when his ship was in port, and he took advantage of this opportunity to pay me particular and marked attention. I was civil to him, of course; and, do you know, I really think he fancied I encouraged him; for yesterday he brought me a small silver anchor, mounted as a brooch, and asked me to give him a keepsake in return. Of course I did not, and wished him to take the brooch back, but he begged so hard for me to keep it and wear it, and sometimes think of him, exposed to all the dangers and disasters of the sea, that, not liking to hurt his feelings, I did so. That is the only reason I have for imagining that he regards me otherwise than as a friend, and the daughter of his owner. Perhaps I am mistaken, but I cannot help thinking that he is, at all events, no friend to you."

But the fair Geraldine was not mistaken, for the sullen, gloomy skipper had taken a violent fancy for her. His was one of those iron natures, who, when they do love or hate, do so, not as the soft summer breeze, but as the boiling tempest, sweeping all from its path. As the two cousins stood at the gangway, Edward holding Geraldine's hand in his, Black Jack, though still listening, or appearing to listen to Mr. Bennet, viewed them with sullen fury. He saw Edward Gale take the girl's hand and draw her towards him—he saw the tear on her cheek, and then he saw the supercargo kiss it away.

For an instant a look of gloomy rage came over his dark features; the next moment his cruel eyes flashed forth a strange light, as he muttered some words between his teeth. Those words were—"Curse him! he shall never come back!"

"What did you say, Captain?" asked Mr. Bennet.

"Nothing, sir—at least, nothing of any consequence. I was just saying that the breeze is rising, the brig is under weigh, and that if you and Miss Bennet do not get into the boat, you will have a rough voyage back."

"True, true. Well, Captain Hawkins, good-bye, and a pleasant voyage to you! See you bring the brig back safe, and take care of my nephew there. He's a decent young fellow, and, by the look of things, I fancy Geraldine would never forgive you, if you didn't bring him back safe."

The owner smiled approvingly on the two young people, and Black Jack replied, with sinister meaning—

"Aye, aye, sir! I'll take care of him, never fear! Let me alone for that."

The next minute father and daughter were in the boat, and the brig dashing down the Bristol Channel before the favouring gale.

* * * * *

A week passed over without anything worthy of notice happening on board the *Geraldine*. Black Jack had kept his word with regard to the supercargo, rendering his position as uncomfortable and wretched as possible.

Edward Gale was a young fellow of spirit, and it is not to be supposed that he submitted to the open affronts and covert insults of the captain in silence. "Captain Hawkins," he said one day, "for some reason or other, you have taken a dislike to me, and seem determined to show it. I wish to have no words with you; you are the captain of this vessel, and so far are supreme—if you please, we will see as little of each other as possible. I will, instead of eating my meals at the cuddy table, have them in my cabin."

"I don't care where the deuce you have your meals; you may go and have them forward in the forecabin if you like; only don't give me any more of your gab, because I don't want it, and won't have it."

The supercargo said nothing in reply to this, thinking it better to avoid all dispute so long as he was so completely in the captain's power, but went below to his cabin. Having no duties on board, he beguiled the time as best he could. Fond of music, and a good performer, a favourite amusement of his was playing on a violin he had brought on board with him. On this occasion, then, the young supercargo retired to his own cabin, and taking his violin, commenced playing "The Girl I left behind me." The captain paced furiously up and down the quarter-deck. His brows were knit, and ever and anon a muttered oath would escape his lips, as the sound of the supercargo's fiddle greeted his ears. Nor did the tune selected fail to have its effect on the temper of Captain Hawkins. It seemed, to his jealous imagination, that Edward Gale had selected it purposely to taunt him. "The Girl he left behind him!" muttered Black Jack. "Curse him! If he ever thinks to possess her, he's mistaken, or my name's not John Hawkins!"

And now the gathering banks of clouds, the falling barometer, and the rising wind, betoken an approaching gale. The crew were turned up to reef topsails, and make all snug for the night, which now set in darkly and threateningly.

Still the sound of the supercargo's fiddle might be heard up the

cabin hatch; the strains of the tune "The Girl I left behind me" rising shrilly over the howling of the wind and the wash of the waves. "Steward!" shouted the captain to that functionary, as he was going forward to the galley to fetch the cabin supper, "when you go off again, tell that stupid supercargo to stop his fiddling. The wind is likely to give us music enough to-night without that squeaking fiddle whining out 'The Girl I left behind me.'" However, before the steward delivered his message the fiddle ceased, and the supercargo, coming on deck, seated himself on a hencoop on the weather-side of the poop, and gazed out on the grand sight the foaming billows, now rapidly rising with the wind, presented.

The skipper still paced up and down the deck, casting, ever and anon, a scorching look on him as he passed. These, however, were unnoticed, for the young man's thoughts were far, far away. His busy fancy wafted him across the heaving, foaming sea to the shores of Old England: In fancy he saw the well-loved form of the fair Geraldine, and heard the music of her sweet voice, and felt the pressure of her soft, warm hand.

Busy in his waking dream, he built up fairy castles in the air, and pictured to himself scenes of future happiness with her he loved so well, and regarded not the howling winds nor the heaving waves.

The increasing gale renders it necessary to take another reef in the topsails, and part the courses, for the brig is now pitching and labouring fearfully under the press of canvas.

"All hands reef topsails!" shouts the boatswain, in obedience to the captain's orders.

Soon the watch below turn up, the yards are squared, and the crew hasten aloft to reef the sails, now flapping and rattling furiously in the wind.

Edward Gale, still lost in his reverie, is seated to windward close to the coil of the main-brace.

Ere reefing the sail, it is necessary to square the yards by hauling on this, and the young supercargo is unconsciously in the way. One of the crew civilly informs him of the fact; but before he can move, Black Jack walks up to him, and giving him a rude shove, says—

"Here, you fiddling land-lubber, away you go out of this! We want none of your sort about the decks; so clear out, and make way for better men!"

Edward Gale started to his feet, and with flashing eye, said—

“Captain Hawkins, I have borne with your insolence and insults long enough. You are the captain of this brig; but I will have you to know that you cannot insult me with impunity. I shall report your ruffianly conduct to the owners by letter from the first port, and warn you not to repeat it.”

The skipper turned white with rage, and grasping an iron belaying-pin, glared furiously at the speaker. But the supercargo, with a look of quiet scorn, descended the cabin stairs, and the captain, muttering an oath, replaced the belaying-pin in the rail, and proceeded to issue directions to reef the sails. The crew now all lay aloft with the exception of the man at the wheel.

It is now night, and the wind howls and roars with fast increasing force, the sea at the same time rising rapidly. And now, above the raging of the storm may be heard the sound of the supercargo’s fiddle playing “The Girl I left behind me.” With a furious oath, the captain again seized the iron belaying-pin, and hastened to descend into the cabin.

Suddenly, however, he checked himself, and going aft to the binnacle, took the wheel from the hands of the helmsman, saying—

“Here, lay aloft, my man, and lend them a hand, for they seem to have some trouble with the sail. I’ll take the helm.”

The man obeyed, and ascended to the fore-topsail yard, on which were all the crew, endeavouring to get the sail under control. The mate, second mate, and the whole of the crew were now aloft. The captain, the supercargo, and the man who acted as both cook and steward were the only persons not on the fore-topsail yard.

“Steward!” shouted the skipper down the hatch, leaving the helm for a moment, “lay aloft, and lend them a hand with the fore-topsail.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” was the reply, and the man went aloft, as ordered, leaving the captain and the supercargo the only living persons on the deck of the brig. A terrible expression came over the fierce, gloomy face of Black Jack. He took a piece of rope, and deliberately lashed the helm, so that the vessel could not broach-to. Then he ran to the rail, and drew forth the iron belaying-pin.

The wind howled and roared amid the cordage of the brig. The waves foamed and dashed themselves against the good ship with a noise like the rushing of a cataract, drowning the shouts and

cries of the sailors encouraging one another on the fore-topsail yard. But above all the howling of the storm and the rushing of the waves might be heard the shrill strains of the supercargo's fiddle, still pouring forth the same tune, "The Girl I left behind me."

And now Black Jack, with a dreadful scowl of hate and fury on his face, dashes hastily down the cabin hatch.

The wind howls and moans among the cordage; the waves foam and roar in their fury; but the shrill sound of the fiddle is heard above the howling of the storm and the roaring of the sea!

A minute at the most elapses, when Black Jack dashes up from below, and again seizes the helm. His face is ghastly white, while his eyes shine with a strange light, as he throws the iron belaying-pin overboard.

The wind howls and moans among the cordage; the waves foam and roar; but the shrill notes of the fiddle are no longer heard above the howling of the storm and the roaring of the sea!

Black Jack stands at the helm, his swarthy face pale and ghastly; but when the crew descend from aloft, he gives his orders calmly and with unfaltering voice.

* * * * *

Edward Gale, the supercargo, lies on his back in his cabin, a ghastly object. One side of his head is stove in as by a terrible crushing blow, and his blood and brains have gushed forth from the wound, spattering his clothes, his face, and the deck around him. His left hand still grasps the fiddle, his right the bow, while his eyes, dreadfully staring upwards, invoke the vengeance of Heaven on *murder!*

* * * * *

The storm raged furiously all night.

"Steward," said the captain, at eight bells, when the breakfast was placed on the table, "call the supercargo, and tell him that breakfast is ready."

The man knocked at the door

No answer.

"Open the door, and wake him," said the captain, carelessly.

The steward obeyed, and entered the cabin.

The next moment he re-appeared, ghastly, and speechless with horror.

"What's the matter with the fellow?" said the mate.

"Mr. Gale, sir," gasped the steward; "dead—covered in blood!"

The mate and captain rose and went to the cabin. There, sure

enough, lay the dead body of poor Edward Gale—a hideous object, the features undistinguishable from brain and clotted gore.

The mate and steward gazed in silent horror.

“Must have fallen from his cot, and killed himself,” said Black Jack, coolly.

The mate and steward proceeded to inspect the corpse.

“Such a wound as this could never have been caused by a fall,” said the mate, calmly, pointing to the dreadful gash through which the brain and splintered bones of the skull were plainly visible.

“I tell you it must have been so. How else could it have happened?” said the skipper, doggedly. “He was asleep, and the rolling of the ship pitched him out on his head.”

“He couldn’t have been asleep, for he has his fiddle in one hand, and bow in the other; and people don’t play the fiddle in their sleep,” said the steward.

“Hold your tongue, you fool, and go and get a bucket and swab, and swab up all this blood!” said the captain.

The steward, sick and faint at the horrible sight, left to obey.

“Here, Mr. Smith,” said Black Jack, “lend me a hand to lift him up to his bunk, that the steward may swab the deck.”

Then the mate and captain raised the corpse, and lifted it on to the bunk.

The mate—a brave mau—sickened, as he gazed on the ghastly face of the dead; but Black Jack, true to his iron nature, took no more notice than if it were the carcase of a sheep, and not the corpse of a man he handled.

The steward now returned and commenced to wash the deck; but, of course, could not remove the stain of blood, which, once spilt, as is well known, defies all efforts to remove it.

Meanwhile, the captain bound up the head of the corpse with a silk handkerchief, and then, sending for one of the crew, he ordered him to sew the body up in a piece of sail-cloth, with a shot at the heels.

The captain remained in the cabin while this was being done and the seaman proceeded with his task in gloomy silence, for already a rumour had gone round among the crew that the supercargo had met his death by foul play.

The man said nothing; but, commencing at the feet of the corpse, he sewed it up as far as the neck; then watching the opportunity when the skipper went into the cuddy to look at the

compass, he pushed on one side the handkerchief enveloping the dead man's head, and saw the terrible wound.

It was but for a moment he gazed, but that moment was enough.

As Black Jack re-entered the cabin, he again covered the head of the body.

"Foul play!" he muttered, as he proceeded with his task. "May I never see Heaven, if that broken skull was ever caused by a fall! A handspike, a crowbar, or a belaying-pin may have done it; but not a fall. No, not even though it were from the mast-head, let alone half-a-dozen feet."

Soon the body is enveloped in its coffin of sail-cloth; and Black Jack gives orders to commit it to the deep.

The gale had somewhat abated, though the wind still howled and moaned dismally, and the sea ran high. A grating was rigged at the gangway and the body placed thereon.

Then, all being in readiness, the captain produced a prayer-book, and with unfaltering voice proceeded to read the burial-service.

The crew stood gathered around the grating, with its ghastly burden, in silent horror.

They knew that there had been foul play; but, even apart from their dread of the terrible captain, they had no proof. Not one of them had seen or even heard anything.

As the captain proceeded with the burial-service, the storm, which had somewhat abated, again raged with redoubled fury.

Heavy banks of clouds arose on the horizon, and soon buried the ship and surrounding sea in one universal gloom. And now the service is almost concluded.

As Black Jack pronounces the words, "Commit his body to the deep," the sailors tilt up the grating, and, with a dull splash, the corpse plunges into the foaming waves.

At that instant, a furious squall struck the vessel, and she heeled over till her lee-bulwarks were almost under water.

The thunder, which for some time had been rumbling and growling all around, now burst forth, and peal succeeded peal in terrible, deafening succession.

It was now almost as dark as night; and the lightning flashed and darted from the angry, black-looking clouds, lighting up the terrible scene with a ghastly violet glare.

Suddenly the thunder ceased to rattle, and the lightnings to dart.

The wind howled and moaned among the cordage; the waves foamed and roared in their fury; but high above the howling of the storm and the roaring of the sea is heard the shrieking of a fiddle.

The tune is, "The Girl I left behind me."

Shrill, harsh, and threatening is the horrid, ghastly sound; now melting aloft in wild, unearthly screamings, now appearing to come from the bosom of the deep in a low bass moan.

The crew stand in silent horror, gazing each in the white face of his neighbour.

And now the wind lulls as suddenly as it rose; and the shrieking of the fiddle also fades away in the distance, the sound seeming still to hover over the place where the body had disappeared.

The captain was the first to speak.

"Who is that playing on the fiddle?" he asked in a voice thick, faltering, and husky. Even his iron nerves are not proof against this terrible manifestation.

No one replies to the question; but the men silently and gloomily disperse, muttering to themselves and casting horrified glances around. The wind has now died away, and a dead calm succeeds the dreadful storm.

The vessel, no longer steadied by the wind, rolls fearfully in the trough of the sea. The sails flap and thrash against the masts with thundering *thuds*, threatening each moment to tear from the bolt-ropes.

So passes the long day. A dismal gloom pervades the ship, the sky, and the surrounding ocean. Black Jack, with livid face, and restless, bloodshot eye, paces the quarter-deck as well as he can for the rolling and tossing of the vessel. Not a soul but he is to be seen on deck. There is not even a man at the helm, for, in the dead calm, she lies like a log in the water, without steerage-way, and tossed about at the mercy of the waves.

Evening settles down on the dreary ocean.

Notwithstanding the calm, the sea does not go down, but the big waves still come rolling in, as if a gale raged everywhere but immediately around the *Geraldine*. The clouds arise in banks on the horizon, and piling themselves together, surge slowly overhead. Battalion after battalion, heavy and lead-coloured, arise and traverse the sky in slow, solemn procession.

The barometer continues to fall, while the sea, strange to say, in the absence of the wind, seems rather to rise.

And now it is again night.

A horrible, dreary, dreadful darkness pervades everything.

Far away in the distance a dull rumbling and growling is heard.

Is it thunder, or the first moanings of the gathering tempest?

Black Jack, with a desperate effort shaking off the terrible vague horror which oppresses him, gives orders to furl all the sails, with the exception of the storm trysail and staysail. This done, he looks forth in the direction from which the threatened hurricane is expected, and mutters defiantly, "Now blow, and do your worst: we are ready for you!"

Bold words, certainly; but Black Jack is a bold—a desperately bold—man. Scarcely are the words out of his mouth than he feels a faint soft breeze fan his hot cheek. The glassy surface of the big rollers is now disturbed by a slight ripple.

Far away in the distance may be heard the same low hum or subdued rumbling which before attracted attention.

It is now ten o'clock; and although at another time the watch below would have been asleep in their hammocks, now not a man is below. All are grouped around the foremast, gazing in silence, and awaiting with a foreboding of evil the coming of something, they know not what.

Slowly, gradually, the first soft air increases to a gentle breeze; then to a brisk breeze; then to a stiff gale; till, by half-past eleven, the wind is blowing almost as furiously as before.

Now it increases each moment in violence, bursting on the vessel in sudden and irresistible gusts; then for a moment, as it were, fading away, but to rush on with redoubled fury.

Once again the dull rumblings of distant thunder are heard, and the violet lightning streaks the horizon. Louder and fiercer pours the howling blast; more terribly and nearer the thunder crashes; more vividly and ghastly the lightning flashes; till it seems as if all nature were about to be swallowed up in the convulsion of the elements.

Hark! What is that which is now heard above the roaring of the tempest? The men huddle together, and the pale faces wax paler with terror as they listen. Even Black Jack himself gazes around with amazement, horror, and fear, seeking to discover whence proceeds the mysterious sound.

The wind howls and moans among the cordage; the waves foam and roar in their fury; but once again, above the howling of the storm and the roaring of the sea, is heard the shrill music of the ghostly fiddle!

The men hear it, and tremble. Black Jack, too, hears it, and the icy hand of mortal horror is on his heart. Suddenly a thought strikes him, and he makes his way down to the cuddy, and thence to the cabin of the murdered supercargo. He searches for the violin. It is not to be found.

"Steward, what have you done with that confounded violin?"

The man declares he has not seen it since *he* took it from the dead man's hand, and placed it on a chest in the cabin.

They both search, but are unable to find it.

A gleam of rage and joy lights up the bad features of Black Jack.

A load is taken from his mind, for he thinks he can now understand the mysterious fiddling.

"Aha!" he muttered, chuckling to himself, "that's their game, is it? So, so—they thought to frighten me, did they? By Jove, I'll make them fiddle another tune before I've done with them."

So saying, he made his way on deck, and hurried forward. "Which of you men have taken the fiddle away from the cabin?" he asks, glaring furiously around.

No answer.

"Come, none of your cursed nonsense with me! Who's been playing on the fiddle?"

Still no reply. The men merely gaze significantly in one another's faces.

"You won't speak, won't you?" said Black Jack, with a fearful oath; "now, mark me, if I hear the fiddle again, by Jove! I'll pitch the fiddler overboard!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth than a terrible peal of thunder seemed to shake the universe to its very foundations. The lightning flashed and darted around, lighting up the scene with a ghostly blue light.

But, as the last rumblings of thunder die away, a wild burst of shrill music succeeds, as if in mockery of the captain's last words. It had not been heard for the last few minutes; *but now, once again, above the howling of the storm and the roaring of the sea, is heard the shrill scream of the ghostly fiddle!*

Black Jack glares furiously around to discover the author of the sounds. They appear to come from the foretop.

He gazes aloft, but in the pitchy darkness of the night he can discover nothing, for the lightning has now ceased to flash.

Lay aloft there, one of you, and see who that is in the foretop

fiddling! By Jove! I'll make it hot for him when he comes on deck!"

The men shrank back in horror.

Not one offered to stir. The ghostly music swelled yet louder, as if in mockery. Another terrible oath breaks from the skipper's lips.

"What! you won't go when you're ordered, won't you? Then, by Jove! I'll go myself, and if I don't pitch the fiddler overboard, may I perish!"

At these dreadful words another crashing peal shook the vault of heaven.

Not daunted, however, Black Jack snatched a belaying-pin from the rail, and springing into the fore-rigging, commenced to ascend to the foretop. The crew gazed in silence. Now Black Jack is up to the futtock-shrouds. He lays hold of these, and swings himself up to the top.

For one instant there is a dead silence. The fiddle ceases. Then a fearful cry of horror bursts forth from the lips of John Hawkins. He almost falls backwards, but, by a desperate effort, recovers himself and commences to descend. Suddenly the sound of the ghostly strain is again heard.

It comes nearer—nearer—still nearer. It is descending the rigging after the skipper. What it was that Black Jack saw in the top will never be known; but when he reached the deck, no corpse was ever so ghastly. His swarthy face was absolutely white with the extremity of terror. His iron-grey hair stood erect and bristling on his head. His eyes glared, and he gasped for breath, while down his face the perspiration streamed, saturating his black beard and falling like drops of rain on his bosom. He spoke not a word, but, with a look of indescribable, speechless horror, staggered off towards the cabin. Scarcely, however, had he gone half-a-dozen steps, than the invisible fiddler, who had apparently descended the fore-rigging after him, also seemed to leap on the deck.

The sound of the fiddle now appeared quite close, and the crew hurried forward, in fear and trembling, to avoid it.

For a moment it appeared stationary; then it appeared to be going aft slowly and deliberately.

Black Jack had now reached as far as the mainmast, when he turned his head and looked behind him.

Again a wild cry of horror broke from his lips.

The men, with faltering steps, followed the sound of the fiddle aft.

They could see nothing, although it was evident that something was visible to the captain.

He trembled all over, and—brave, strong man as he was—absolutely shrieked with horror.

He seemed fascinated, and was unable to take his eyes from the phantom which was visible to him alone.

Still the fiddle kept on its dismal strain, slowly and steadily advancing aft, followed by the horror-stricken crew.

Still Black Jack staggered backwards—now holding with his hands, now giving vent to incoherent cries of horror and fear.

“Back! back! Curse you!” he cried, in a dreadful voice; “what do you want?”

The only reply was a fresh burst of mocking music.

Black Jack, still retreating backwards step by step, was now almost abreast of the binnacle; a few more steps, and he would be at the taffrail, and could retreat no further without going overboard.

“Bill,” said one of the sailors to another, in a hoarse voice, “*the ghost’s going to fiddle him overboard!*”

A thrill of horror ran through the crew at these words.

And now Black Jack is right aft at the taffrail, and can retreat no further. He grasps the rail with all his force, and seems struggling against a power which is endeavouring to force him overboard.

All at once, as by an irresistible impulse, he casts his eyes over the stern on to the black and furious waves.

A terrible cry of horror and agony bursts from him, drowning for a moment even the sound of the fiddle.

The crew follow his glance with theirs.

No wonder that Black Jack shrieks and yells for mercy in his mortal terror; for in the water, right under the brig’s stern, they all see the corpse, in its sail-cloth shroud, which they had that day committed to the deep, with a shot at the heels.

It is floating upright in the water; that part of the shroud covering the head has been torn on one side, so that the blood-stained face of the murdered man can be plainly seen.

Its eyes seem to glare revengefully on Black Jack. The linen shakes up and down from the tossing of the waves, giving cause for the horrible idea that the murdered man is grimacing at his murderer.

And now they see close to their captain a faint cloudy light.

At first they can distinguish nothing definite; but, by degrees, the misty cloud takes shape, and they perceive the form of a man!

Yes, it is the figure of the murdered supercargo—stiff, stark, pale, and ghostly!

It holds the fiddle in one hand, the bow in the other; and is frantically fiddling away, and glancing towards where the murderer stands, grasping convulsively the rail.

Nearer and nearer the phantom presses, still fiddling away with ghostly energy.

Yells and howls of despair again break forth from the murderer, as he gazes, first on the phantom on the deck, then on the corpse in the sea.

The ghost fiddles away furiously, and step by step advances towards him, glaring threateningly on him. He turns away with a shriek of horror, and meets the glassy eyes of the corpse also glaring on him. He can see the blood-stained face, the white teeth; while the lower jaw rising and falling, makes it appear to be gibbering and grimacing at him.

Wildly he turns, in his dire extremity, from one to the other—from the corpse to the phantom.

The phantom glares on him, and fiddles furiously; the corpse glares on him, and gibbers horribly with its blood-stained face.

Turn where he will, there is no escape. The phantom on the deck before him—the murdered man in the sea behind him.

The body bobs up and down in the sea, nodding, gibbering, and appearing to beckon him to its loathsome embrace.

The phantom fiddles away, and approaches its dreadful ghostly face yet closer to his.

At last, with one wild shriek of music, the ghost opens its arms, and seems about to clasp the murderer in its embrace.

Black Jack, with a shriek of horror, is seen to fall over the taff-rail into the black and gloomy waves.

The phantom fiddle gives forth a wild, unearthly strain of triumph, and the crew, peering over the stern, see Black Jack and the corpse locked in close embrace.

The ghastly face of the murderer and the ghastly, blood-stained face of the corpse are in close proximity.

The blood streaming over the face of the dead, now besmears the face and black beard of the living. The murderer howls, yells, and gurgles forth alike prayers and imprecations.

The glassy eyes of the dead glare fearfully at vacancy, while the jaw still works up and down, as if in gibbering mockery of the murderer's agony.

Now the phantom fiddle gives forth one final thrilling shriek.

The thunder roars and the lightning flashes. Down, down they go—the murderer and the murdered—the living and the dead—down to the cavernous recesses in old Ocean's mighty bosom!

Down into the black, gloomy waves! A phosphorescent light seems to play around the corpse, so that the horror-stricken crew can see the two forms as they sink together.

The glassy eyes of the corpse stare dreadfully, vacantly, as before—the jaw working up and down in ghastly contrast to the stony immobility of the other features.

Down, down they go—rolling—tumbling—struggling—locked in a close embrace—the murderer and the murdered!

The wind howls and moans among the cordage; the waves foam and roar in their fury; but once again above the howling of the wind and the roaring of the sea, is heard the shrill sound of the phantom fiddle. Then the forms of the murderer and the murdered disappear in the black depths of the sea; the strains of the fiddle die away in the distance; the wind lulls, the waves abate their fury; and now, where nought could be heard but the howling of the storm, the roaring waves, the shrill strains of the fiddle, and the yells of the murderer—all is still!

Black Jack has met his doom!

XIII.

HOMeward BOUND.



HOMeward BOUND!—there is a magic charm in those two simple words. Whether careering along across old Ocean's bosom from Arctic Pole or Tropic Zone; swiftly rattling in express train through green fields and pleasant pastures, from smoking city to the abode of friends and relations,—no matter under what circumstances, there is (especially at the merry Christmas season) the same sweet charm in the words—Homeward Bound!

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
 Who never to himself hath said—
 This is my own, my native land?
 Whose heart has ne'er within him burned,
 As *home* his footsteps he hath turned,
 From wandering on a foreign strand?”

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Sir Walter Scott asks in the above stanza, *iz*, fact, whether there is any human being so dead to the sweet and pure influence of home as to be insensible to the charm embodied in the words—Homeward Bound!

Ask the schoolboy what are his thoughts at the close of the half-year? He is Homeward Bound, and his thoughts are at the old place before coach or rail can transport his body. Ask the veteran soldier, toil-worn and battle-scarred, which is the happiest moment in all his long foreign servitude?—That in which the regiment gets the *route* for old England—when he hears the joyful news that they are going home—Homeward Bound! Once more: ask the sailor who has been cruising, perchance, all round the world, what two words bring the greatest pleasure? He will reply—“Homeward Bound!”

Those who “live at home at ease” can form no estimate of the delicious sensation caused by those simple words in the bosom of

the sailor, far away on the deep blue sea. In cold or heat, storm or tempest, homeward bound is the soother of all afflictions, the watch-word of joy. The man at the wheel, when relieved, gives the course north-east by north, Jack—homeward bound!

And now, in fancy, we will transport ourselves on board the good ship *Trafalgar*, from Melbourne to London—homeward bound!

* * * * *

The “stormy Horn” has been safely rounded, the south-east trade wind run down, and gradually as the equator was approached the constellations of the other hemisphere, the Southern Cross, and Orion with his bright belt, and others, sank from view, and as the vessel ploughed her northern way, the old familiar groups arose—the Great and Little Bears, and the well-known pole-star, appeared first just above the horizon, gradually rising as day by day the ship sped on.

The *Trafalgar* is a fine vessel of 1,400 tons, A 1, and commanded by Captain Jamie Robertson. She carries a crew of forty men, besides officers, stewards, assistants, and so on. Of passengers, she brings back to the old country fifteen in the chief cabin, and thirty in the second. Three mates—first, second, and third, carpenter, cook, cook’s mate, boatswain, and two boatswains’ mates, steward, cuddy servant and cabin boy, with the forty able seamen, ordinary seamen, and boys, make up the complement of the *Trafalgar*. Thus it will be observed she carries on board, crew and passengers, only two short of a hundred souls. All hearts beat high with hope and joyous anticipation. Having run out of the north-east trade winds, her course is shaped north-east-by-east, the wind blowing a pleasant gale from the north-west,—a point abaft the beam.

Nothing could be more favourable than the prospects of this homeward passage, with her rich freight of wool, colonial produce, and bright yellow Australian gold, to say nothing of her crew and passengers. The captain, with just confidence, anticipates a splendid passage, perchance he may even achieve that summit of merchant-service commanders—“the quickest passage on record.”

Away she speeds, careening over to the brisk favouring gale, her homeward-pointed nose saucily tossing the spray aloft as she plunges on under a full spread of canvas. Day by day, “dead reckoning and observation” announce the welcome fact that the termination of the voyage is rapidly approaching. The skipper

pricks off each day at noon the course and distance she has made in the twenty-four hours, and proudly points to the increasing length of each day's work; for the wind is slowly but steadily rising,—200 miles, 220 miles, 240, 270, and at last 295 miles are spanned in the run between noon and noon.

Glorious was the captain, as he walked the weather-side of the poop the day on which the stout vessel had achieved this.

"This'll be a clipper passage, and no mistake, Captain Robertson," says the mate.

"I mean it. By Jove, sir, if this wind hold another two days, we'll make the quickest passage on record, from land to land."

"There she goes!" a sailor abruptly cries, as the vessel heels over till her lee-scuppers are under water. "Fourteen knots an hour, I'll bet my grog! The London gals have got hold of the tow-rope this time, and no mistake."

The log was hove on the evening of the 2nd of November, 1864, and it chronicled a clear fifteen knots off the reel.

"Go it, good ship!" the captain shouts in high glee; "hold on, good spars, and blow on, good breeze!"

"Aye, but gently though, captain," the mate, one John McDonald, a cautious Scotchman, put in. "Hope it won't freshen any more; it's as much as she can stagger under water. That fore topmast studding-sail boom is bending like a coach-whip."

"Reeve a 'preventer,' then, Mr. McDonald; she can carry it, and carry it she shall."

"What about the fore topgallant mast, sir? it's just a little bit sprung. Reckon she can't carry the sail much longer with safety."

"Then let her drag it," was the somewhat careless reply of the captain: "I mean to make a passage, and no mistake about it."

Nevertheless, the skipper went forward and looked anxiously at the now straining mast.

She was going so splendidly that though he hesitated a little he did not order the sail to be taken in. And so the vessel tore along through the foaming waves, at times burying her nose up to the catheads in sea and spray.

Slowly, gradually, but surely the wind began to shift; not foul however, but further off. This necessitated only a slight squaring, of the yards, but caused her to steer with more difficulty. By daylight the next day the wind was south-west, just two points on the port-quarter. The sky, from being clear and bright, grew by degrees hazy and overcast. The sea, too, rose rapidly, and now a

heavy swell was rolling and tumbling after the ship, as she rushed along at full fifteen knots.

That day there was no opportunity of getting a sight at the sun, so that, as no observations could be taken, they had to depend on the "dead reckoning" for latitude and longitude. "Dead reckoning" is made by counting up the number of knots the vessel has sailed each hour, as marked on the log slate, and the course. Supposing that the pace of the ship has been accurately measured for each hour, that she has been truly steered, proper allowance been made for "lee-way," and there have been no currents at work to drift her—then the latitude and longitude can be determined nearly as accurately by dead reckoning as by observation.

But it is always dangerous to depend on dead reckoning, especially when nearing a dangerous coast like that of the English Channel. No wonder, then, that as the sky got hourly more overcast, the horizon more hazy, the sea more stormy, the captain and officers should look grave.

There arose too, toward evening on this day, another cause for uneasiness. The wind was still, and, after resting dead aft for a short time, came round on the starboard quarter. It was now between south and south-west; still fair, but if anything, increasing in force.

Onward paced the *Trafalgar*, chased vainly by huge mountainous waves, "white waves," whose crested tops gleamed phosphorescently in the night and roared a continuous storm song.

The mainsail was now hauled up and furled, as were the top-gallant sails. The ship was now staggering along under three topsails, foresail, and jib, which latter was kept set in case she should yaw up to the wind.

"Are we going to have a southerly 'buster,' captain?" asked the mate, looking suspiciously at the lowering sky and heavy sea astern.

"No, I think not; fancy the wind will blow itself out by morning."

"It's blowing great guns now."

"Sail, ho!" shouted the man on the look-out.

"Where away?"

"Brace points on the weather-bow!"

It was just dusk, but there was light enough for them to distinguish a large ship hove-to on the port tack. She had lost her

fore topmast and jibboom, and lay-to under close-reefed main top-sail only. They could see as they approached that she was labouring heavily, and the captain caused the course to be altered slightly so as to pass within hail.

At the tremendous pace the *Trafalgar* was now going, a few minutes brought the strange vessel close on the weather beam. Then the ship was brought up to the wind a point or so, and shot across the other's bows. The captain of the vessel hove-to, stood in the forerigging, for the forecastle was completely swept by the heavy sea.

"What ship is that?" hailed Captain Robertson.

"American ship, *Flying Cloud*, bound to New York. What ship is that?"

"British ship, *Trafalgar*, Melbourne to London. Sixty-one days out. Do you want any assistance?"

"Thanks, no; reckon the *Cloud* will weather through this as she has many another gale," replied the Yankee commander.

A half-minute later, and the vessels were out of hail; so great was the pace at which the *Trafalgar* dashed by.

"She's making heavy weather of it, Mr. McDonald," said the captain. "It's blowing a heavy gale. We don't feel it so much scudding, as we are almost before the wind. It will be moderate by morning. Same course—nothing to eastward. We shall be in the chops of the Channel to-morrow evening, if we have good luck."

All through the night the *Trafalgar* careered on like a mad thing. At times, and when a gust of unusual force burst on her, old sailors declared that she did eighteen knots. The gale increased in violence till midnight, and then it held as it was. The sea, however, still rose, and caused her to steer so wildly that it took four men at the wheel.

Daylight dawned on a scene of wild grandeur. Far as the eye could reach was an expanse of tumbling mountains of waves, whose white tips gleamed viciously through the haze. The roar of winds and waves was incessant, and the sailors could never hear one another's voices, by reason of the ocean concert. Towards daylight, however, the wind moderated a little, in so far as this, that it blew steadily, and the dangerous gusts which at times swept over the sea ceased.

The good ship staggered on still at a rattling pace, and as the sea did not abate, she groaned, laboured, and her timbers creaked

in a most dismal manner. The day which broke was of a more overclouded and hazy character than the one which had preceded it, and though the skipper kept a sharp look-out, there was not a ghost of a chance of getting an observation.

So at noon the ship's place was again carefully calculated by dead reckoning. The wind now abated considerably, and as it hauled still more to southward, the main topgallant sail and main-sail were set.

This had the effect of heeling her over more, but also steadied her, preventing the heavy weather rolls.

The captain was now anxious. No observations had been taken for nearly three days, and in that time she had traversed nearly eight hundred miles. The deep-sea lead was passed along, but no bottom was got.

"All right," said the skipper; "I reckon this gale has about blown itself out. We'll carry on till we get the soundings, and then lay-to, if I have any doubt as to where she is."

The afternoon passed, and the wind lulled to a brisk gale, under which, with topgallant sails and jib spanker, the *Trafalgar* made nine or nine-and-a-half miles an hour.

The first dog-watch—"pass the lead line along," was now the order.

The vessel was brought up to the wind to stop her way, and soundings found at eighty-five fathoms. A thrill of joy shot through the ship when the news was announced.

The voyage was indeed approaching its termination. She must be somewhere near the chops of the Channel, and the morrow would, in all probability, reveal to many anxious eyes the well-loved rugged coast of Albion.

The captain and mate consulted the chart, and calculated to a nicety where she was. A bright look-out was ordered, and soundings to be taken at every watch.

In the second dog-watch the wind had moderated to a pleasant breeze, and was still falling, though the sea still ran high. The most provoking part of the business was the hazy nature of the atmosphere, which prevented anything being seen beyond half a mile or so.

Everybody was in excellent spirits, and great was the rejoicing when sundry bottles of grog were sent round to the fore-castle by the captain, to commemorate the happy event of striking soundings.

Soon in the fore-castle there might be seen a merry group of sailors, and two or three second-cabin passengers—among them a gold-digger, a brawny, swarthy, bearded man, who had wrung enough treasure from the bowels of the earth to keep him in ease,—aye, in luxury—for the rest of his life. There was the boat-swain—honest John Alexander—a broad-shouldered, rather short Hercules of a man—some said the strongest on board, though others, and the majority, gave the palm to a gigantic sailor, six feet five inches high—broad in proportion, and who rejoiced in the cognomen of Hallelujah Jack.

Then, too, attracted by the grog, there came into the fore-castle the doctor, alias the black cook.

Then, to make up the party, there were eight or ten old merchant salts, two or three whalers, a few man-of-war's men, and last, also least, little "Cock Robin," the cabin-boy.

He had received the nickname of Cock Robin not merely from his small size, but from his other peculiarities. His eyes were bright and piercing, his body small, his legs long and slender; and these he could twist about in the most extraordinary manner, absolutely tying them in a knot as he sat perched cross-legged, according to his fashion.

A quaint, queer little hale face had Cock Robin—a strange thin piping voice; not harsh or unmusical, but like the noise made by a cricket in its extreme minuteness.

A favourite with all on board was Cock Robin; but most of all with Hallelujah Jack, who would have suffered every bone in his brawny frame to be broken ere he would have allowed harm to happen to his pet—his little imp-like friend.

And where, of all places in the world, is Cock Robin seated in the goodly conclave of homeward-bound mariners?

Where else than on the shoulder of his friend the sailor? There he sits, cat-like, in high glee; Hallelujah Jack no more feeling his weight than would you, reader, perchance, that of a kitten. It has been proposed, and the proposal carried with acclamation, that yarns should be the order of the evening.

The black cook promises one; a Yankee sailor does the same. The burly gold-digger also announces that he has a tale to unfold; also one of the whalers; and, lastly, Hallelujah Jack.

Cock Robin claps his hands, and shouts aloud with joy.

"Steady, you imp of Satan!" cries Jack, good-humouredly, "it's not such an easy task balancing you, with the ship rolling

and pitching the way she is, for you wriggle and writhe like an eel on the hook. I tell you what it is—you shall spin a yarn."

"Me spin a yarn!" pipes Cock Robin, in surprise.

"Yes; why not? I daresay you can."

"I never tried."

"Then you shall to-night: don't matter how short it is, young scaramouch; we'll have a yarn out o' yer, and no mistake."

"I'll try, Jack," the little fellow said, cheerfully.

"All right, my hearty! Now then, let's have a 'nobbler' all round. Drink to wives and sweethearts, and then for the yarns. We're homeward bound, lads, and can afford to be jolly."

The toast was drunk, and then the rough sailors settled themselves each to his satisfaction.

There was a small American stove, not much bigger in diameter than a good-sized flower-pot. On this was the kettle and the hot grog, and around it they clustered, sitting on chests, reclining or lying at full length, as choice might dictate.

All but Cock Robin, who retained his perch on the shoulder of Hallelujah Jack. Here he sat, grave as a young owl, possibly cogitating on the yarn he himself had promised.

Now then, reader; listen to yarn the first!



THE HAUNTED BRIG.

It's now going on thirty odd years since, one day, cruising about the wharves of Bristol city, I noticed a tidy-looking brig, and, looking at the name on her stern, I saw it was the *Wild Duck*, of Cardiff.

She was as neat and pretty a craft as a man would wish to set eyes on,—clipper-built, black hull, and painted ports, raking masts, black yards, and all so taut and dandy, oh! alow and aloft.

Thinks I, she'll do. There was a board up in her main rigging saying she was bound for Jamaica, and wanted hands; so away I went to the shipping-office, and signed articles as A. B. on board the *Wild Duck*.

The next day we went to sea. For the first week we had fair wind and fine weather, and everything went on regular; but after that there began to be the devil to pay and no pitch hot.

Strange noises were heard, and, though nothing was ever seen,

a vague terror began to pervade all hands. One of the lads declared that on a stormy night, when he was aloft alone, porting the main-royal, he distinctly heard some one clamber up the rigging on the lee yard-arm. It was not dark, and, though he could see the sail being rolled up by invisible hands, there was nothing else visible.

That lad came down by the royal backstay like lightning, and, what's more, he bruised all the skin off his hands sliding down so quick. The mate had to send a man up, for neither threats nor blows could make that lad venture aloft again.

The man reported that the lee yard-arm of the sail was furled, and the gasket made properly fast. The boy, however, declared most solemnly that he had not touched the lee yard-arm at all; but when he saw the sail furling itself, as it were, down he came with a run.

The next day there was heard a tremendous rattling in the chain locker, but, though a light was lowered down, nothing could be seen.

By-and-by there went a rumour about the brig that a strange man had been seen on the forecastle; several times the look-out had seen a figure sitting by the weather cathead. When hailed or approached, this figure generally vanished over the bows.

Altogether, things began to get very uncomfortable, and I began heartily to repent of ever having shipped on board the *Wild Duck*.

We had been out about three weeks, when one fine night a crash was heard aloft. A man was sent up to see what was the matter.

"Main topsail yard carried away in the slings, sir."

"Topsail yard carried away!" growled the mate; "why, there isn't a capful of wind."

"Main topsail yard carried away in a gentle breeze like this—impossible!" cried the skipper as he came on deck.

"It's true, sir," said the mate.

"Then *the devil's in the brig*, that's all I've got to say."

* * * * *

It really seemed as though the devil was in the brig, for, from that night, all sorts of extraordinary and unlooked-for accidents occurred. The foressail split right across the bunt as though it had been cut with a knife; and so the rent looked, more than a fair tear. Then there were continual noises in the hold, and oftentimes the sound of footsteps would be heard, as though some one were slowly marching along the deck.

I tell you, shipmates, things began to get very unpleasant. It was too evident that the brig was haunted, and the ghost or the devil got bolder and more troublesome every day. There was very little sleep got on board that craft. I, for my part, got quite thin and haggard from continual terror and want of rest.

Then, one dog-watch, we were all sitting on the weather side of the main-deck, getting our supper, when a fellow we called Starboard Tom began to tell how he had heard of a Cardiff brig that was haunted. At the time he shipped he didn't think this was the one, as she had stump topgallant masts, and he was sure her name wan't the *Wild Duck*, though he forgot what it was.

"But, you know," he said, "her rig might have been altered, and her name changed, for this haunted brig never could get a crew. Anyhow, if she's the brig, we can easily know; an old chum of mine sailed in her years ago, and he told me that this haunted brig had a red spot on the deck of her lower forecandle as big as a man's hand, close by her stanchion amidships."

Down we went into the forecandle, some of us, and there, sure enough, in the place described we discovered a large dark red spot—a *blech of blood*!

"How did that spot come there?" one of our fellows asked of Starboard Tom.

"Well," he says, "I'll tell you just as it was told me. My chum told me that years ago the crew of this here brig mutinised at sea. They killed the captain most cruel, cowardly, and treacherous. He came down into the forecandle to see a sick man, and one of the ringleaders hit him from behind with an axe, and killed him; that red spot is where his head struck the deck. The crew then robbed the brig and left her. Some time afterwards she was picked up by a man-o'-war and taken into Portsmouth, where she lay a long time; for she was haunted then, and no crew could be got—not even a ship-keeper or one of the dock labourers could be prevailed on to stop on board her. At last, I believe, they sent her round to Liverpool, and got a crew for her. I've heard of her lots o' times since, and now it seems the owners have given her a fresh rig and name in order to deceive poor sailor men into shipping on board their d—d haunted hooker. I mean to say it's a thundering shame; and now, as I know this is the brig, I shall take leg-bail—run away as soon as ever I can."

We all agreed with Starboard Tom, and I, for my part, determined to leave the accursed craft at the very first opportunity.

For two or three days things were pretty quiet. One evening, about dusk, the carpenter went down into the forecabin to get something out of his chest.

All hands were on deck, for the weather was beautiful and fine; so "chips" had it all to himself. It almost seemed as if the ghost had been waiting his opportunity.

The carpenter was a big, strong man, and a brave man, too, and always held out that it was all nonsense about the brig being haunted—he wouldn't believe it. He had been down about five minutes or thereabouts, when we heard a noise (not much) as though a man, half strangled, were trying to call for help. The next moment we heard a loud yell of agony, and the carpenter burst up the forecabin, his face all black, his throat discoloured, his mouth wide open, his eyes almost starting from his head. He kept looking back as if something was chasing him, and after screaming out, "O Lord! he's choking me!" he fell senseless on the deck.

Well, you may be sure there was a devil of a scene. Some were frightened out of their lives, and even the skipper looked pale as he listened to what the carpenter said.

Trembling all over, he gave the following account of what occurred, so soon as he was sufficiently recovered:—

"When I had got what I wanted from my chest, I turned into my bunk, thinking to lie a few minutes,—for I was tired out with my day's work. All at once I heard something moving about in the forecabin. Now, as I knew that all hands were on deck, this surprised me a good deal. So I turned over and looked about. I could see nothing. All at once, and without the slightest warning, I felt myself knocked backwards in my bunk,—for I had raised myself on my elbow to look out. Then I felt two hands—horrid, bony, cold hands—at my throat, choking me. I could see nothing. I tried to get away, but the ghost was too strong. Then I felt something on my cheek like human breath, and struggled desperately, and tried to scream out, but in vain; till all at once I heard the sound of some devilish laughter—the hands were removed from my throat, and I jumped up and ran on deck. This is all that I know; look at the marks of the fingers on my neck."

Terror-stricken, we obeyed, and a shudder ran through my frame as I distinctly made out the marks of fingers on the man's neck. This was enough for us. We all felt as though we were in the power of the Evil One.

That night not a man went below into the fore-castle. We lay on deck, under the lee of the long-boat, all huddled together like a lot of pigs. It was my first wheel in the middle watch that night, and very lonely and dreary it was, I tell you, mates. The second mate seated himself on the poop rail and soon dozed off to sleep. About three bells I saw something moving near the weather gangway, walking to and fro like a man on watch. Now, I knew it was none of the crew, because they never came so far aft as the quarter-deck; and it was not the officer of the watch, for I could see him dozing on the rail. I couldn't make out exactly what it was, but I tell you I didn't feel comfortable by a long way. So I kept quiet, and watched it. By-and-by it seemed to take the appearance of a man dressed in light clothes. I was quite scared by this time, and felt a trembling come over my limbs. "The ghost!" I said to myself, and the thought caused me to shiver as if with cold. Just before four bells it disappeared, and I was just congratulating myself that my turn at the wheel was nearly over, when up came a man from the cabin, dressed in white flannel drawers and shirt and white nightcap. I thought it was the skipper just turned out of his bunk. It went to the weather rail, where the second mate sat dozing, and stooped and stared him in the face; it stood so for full five minutes. "Stand by for squalls!" I thought to myself; "the skipper's caught the second dicky dozing, and will give it him pretty hot." Just at that moment the figure turned round and walked aft. I, still thinking it was the skipper, did not feel alarmed as it approached me—until suddenly the real captain stuck his head up the companion-way, and sang out, "How's her head, my lad?"

At the same time I observed the face of the figure—it was all white, as it were, like the face of a corpse. The eyes were hollow and sunken, but blazed with an unearthly light. One part of the white flannel dress of the figure was all splashed and stained with blood. I remember screaming out "The ghost!" and then sank fainting to the deck. I don't consider myself a coward by any means, but the sudden sight of that blood-stained figure, with its horrid corpse face, walking towards me, quite overcame me. My heart stood still, and for the first time in my life I fainted clean away. I saw the ghost no more, nor did any of us, though we heard mysterious noises continually. Two days afterwards we entered Kingston harbour, Jamaica, and all hands deserted right off. I know nothing but putting me in irons should have kept me

on board that cursed brig, and I reckon all hands felt about the same.

There was a British sloop of war in the harbour, and I shipped on board her at once. I believe I'd have done anything to have got clear of that haunted brig.

Well, the sloop sailed, and I, with another of the late crew of the *Wild Duck*, with her. Our cruising ground was in the Spanish main and about the islands. Times were pleasant enough—the ship was comfortable, and so six months passed very quickly. One evening, about sunset, the look-out on the fore-topgallant yard sang out, "Sail, ho!"

We bore down on the craft, and just about dusk got close to her, and hailed.

She was a brig, standing to the northward, with all sails set—stunsails alow and aloft; and yet, somehow, she didn't seem to make much way, for we kept up with her quite easily.

She made no answer to our hail, and then we noticed, as we ranged up close, that there was not a soul on her decks—not even a man at the wheel.

All at once, we saw two men come up from the cabin. I nearly cried out, as I recognised in the foremost one the same horrible figure in white flannel which had so scared me on board the *Wild Duck*. I know now that it was the same brig, too, though her name and rig had again been changed.

The two men walked slowly forward, the figure in white flannel going first. This one was the ghost of the murdered skipper, and the other—ah! I understood it all now—was the murderer. The two phantoms were about to rehearse the terrible tragedy; I shuddered as I thought that this was the murderer's punishment.

The figure which walked behind was that of a powerful, black-visaged sailor. He carried an axe in his hand, and seemed to steal cautiously on tip-toe behind the other. I could distinguish a horrid sort of leer on the face of the first phantom; and when it proceeded to descend the forecastle, it shook its head in the most dreadful and ghastly manner, baring its teeth, and causing a shudder to shoot through my frame.

Just at this moment the second figure darted forward, raised the axe, and dealt the other a terrible blow with it.

"Murder, by Heaven!" shouted our captain, who had no idea they were phantoms. "Second cutter away! Board the brig, Mr. Edwards, and see what all this means."

The order was addressed to the third lieutenant, and, in man-of-war fashion, was promptly obeyed. I heard the boatswain's whistle piping "Second cutter away!" and stood for a moment or two in a sort of trance.

"Now then, my lad, join the second cutter—look alive!"

It was a fact, and it was my duty to row the lieutenant on board this dreadful brig! However, the habit of discipline was strong, and I jumped into the boat, and, taking my oar, we were soon alongside the haunted brig. I was called on board, and again stood on the deck of this accursed vessel.

Everything looked right at first. She was going comfortably enough before the wind; but there was no living thing to be seen.

"Follow me, a couple of you, down into the forecabin," said the lieutenant; "we'll see what's become of those two fellows."

I need scarcely say that I hung back, and fortunately two others volunteered to follow the officer. They came up in a short time, looking pale and scared. There was not a soul to be seen in the forecabin, but they had all distinctly heard the sound of low mocking laughter. The chests of the crew were all there, but there was no sign of a living thing. On deck it was the same; every rope was belayed in the right place and coiled up regular. In the first mate's cabin the log-book lay open, and across it a pen. The last entry, about a week back, was as follows:—"All hands flocked aft, and reported that a strange man was on the forecabin, and that they dared not go forward. They seem in a state of the greatest terror." Then there was a mark and blot of ink, as if the writer had been suddenly disturbed. That was enough for me, and right glad I was when we regained the sloop. Scarcely had we reported to the skipper what we had seen, and the state in which we had found things, than we all saw the man with the axe come up again from the forecabin. The axe seemed to be dripping with blood, and he himself appeared in mortal terror. Behind him there came another figure—that of a tall, dark man, with saturnine countenance and gleaming eyes, who moved slowly along the deck after the murderer. This latter disappeared down into the cabin; the other figure turned to us for a moment, pointed down, and then slowly went down the companion-way also. Then there came a series of the most terrific shrieks, accompanied by demoniacal laughter. Suddenly the brig gave a heavy lurch to port, appearing to quiver in every timber; then she plunged down stern-foremost, and that was the last ever seen of her.

As to what became of her crew, nobody ever learned their fate; they were never heard of, and this was the last ever heard or seen of the Haunted Brig.

THE BLACK COOK'S YARN.

I 'SPOSE I'd a father and mother, like other people, but I don't know nothin' more about 'um than they do of me now.

I was dragged up on a plantation in old Kentucky, where I lived until I'd done growin' anything but older at the rate of seven days a week.

Everyone has somethin' to be proud of; if not, he's a misserbul cuss, and wuth nuthin' to hisself or anyone else.

Now, I'm goin' to tell you why I thought somethin' of myself. I was once told confidentially that my master had said I was wuth twelve hundred dollars, and I knew that he would be willin' to sell some of the boys on the plantation for half the money.

I natrally thought my master was a very rich man—not that he owned a large plantation, several horses, slaves, and some other property, but because he owned a young, strong, good-lookin' feller like me.

One time it suddenly 'curred to me that I might make myself wuth nearly as much as my master. I'd only got to steal myself, and then I'd be wuth twelve hundred dollars. "That's the way to make a fortune," thought I, "and I'll do it."

Fortunes wuth havin' are not made without a little trouble; and although I'd not got to travel fur to find the fortune I was wantin', I knew that a long journey was before me in keepin' possession of such valuable property as a stolen slave.

As I thought about this business, I fust saw the disadvantage of bein' wuth too much money.

On the plantation war two or three old slaves, that had been nearly worked out. They could get away easily, for they war not wuth much lookin' after; but if I was startin', a big hunt would be made for me. I was wuth twelve hundred dollars, and would have all the dogs, horses, and men in the neighbourhood after me. I was becomin' quite disgusted with myself for bein' young, strong, and willin' to work, until I happened to think that if I was

like some of the used-up hands on the plantation, it would never pay for me to steal myself.

After makin' up my mind that I'd become a man of property—that I should own twelve hundred dollars and as much more as I could get—I had to wait awhile for the proper time of year for travellin'. I waited until fruit was growin' in the orchards and grain in the fields, so that I should have somethin' to eat without troublin' any of the hotels 'long the road.

One evenin' when the moon was about a week old I started on my journey, with my heels pinting to the south.

I was wuth twelve hundred dollars—not in money, but in somethin' much better; and I was determined to keep what I'd got, or die.

I walked all that night, and the next day I kept hid in a corn-field, and not far from a small tree; for I was somewhat afraid that a pack of hounds would be after me in the afternoon, and I didn't want my twelve hundred dollars squandered in feedin' hungry dogs.

One mornin' at daylight, after havin' walked all night, I crawled into a small cornfield, thinkin' to stop thar for the day. After I had been thar about two hours, eight or ten men come into the field and commenced cuttin' the grain. It was a strong hint fur me to travel further, and I crawled through the grain until I reached the feuce. While gettin' over it I was seen, and all the men came runnin' after me; they saw that I was stealin' off, and knew that I was a runaway slave, for whom a reward would be offered.

In order to save my twelve hundred dollars' wuth of property, I saw that I must take it away from that neighbourhood as quick as possible, and I started for some timber growin' about a mile away. I was never very spry on my feet, and I soon saw that I was not makin' myself scarce half fast enough. Three or four of 'em war gainin' on me. On reachin' the timber, I found that it was growin' on the banks of a river.

Three or four men were not more than two hundred yards from me, and I had been driv' into a bend of the stream. Thar was no room for me to go on another tack; the river would head me off, or I'd be caught by the men follerin' me.

The question then was, "Mus' I lose twelve hundred dollars because I can't swim?"

Close agin the bank of the river was a large log that had floated

down the stream and lodged agin the bend of the bank. Some smaller drift-wood had caught agin the larger one, and I thought I'd make a hoss of one piece and ride over.

The fust thing I sor on gettin' amongst the flood-wood, was that the log was holler, and I was fool enough to think of hidin' instead of goin' over.

The log was about forty foot long, and four foot through at the butt-end; and as thar was no time for thiukin' which plan was best, I crawled into it. Half a minute more, and I heard the men talkin' over my head.

"Can't you see his wool in the water?" said one of the men.

"There's something down stream."

The next second they war off after my straw hat, which was floatin' down the river. Bom-bye they came back again, and went lookin' about 'mongst the drift-wood, and pushin' pieces of it into the stream.

Two of them war standin' on the big log, and tipped one end of it so far down that my hidin' place filled with water, and I had to climb further up to keep from drownin'. There was only just room for me, and when the water rose up a little higher, I had to jam myself further into the holler until I could not move another inch. Then came another demand for air, for the water was risin' about my ears.

Puttin' my hands forward and kickin' with my feet, I made another tremenjus struggle to crawl further, but I only got myself stuck so fast by my shoulders that I could not move one way or the other.

When I'd been jammed in that way, and strugglin' to keep my head out o' water, for as near as I can judge a hundred years, the log giv' a roll over—bobbed about fur a little, and I could tell that it was floatin' down the river.

In tryin' to fin' me, the men set it free from the place whar it had lodged.

I now had a little more air, for the log was not quite so fur in the water, and I commenced tryin' to move down whar I'd have more room.

The log then commenced driftin' end on, sendin' a current of water through that kept me about half kivered.

Sudintly it rolled over, leavin' me face down'ards, and I was drownin' agin.

The Lord only knows the trouble I had in savin' my twelve

hundred dollars' wuth of property while in that holler log. After a few years, or what 'peared so to me, I managed to crawl back'ards until I'd plenty of room. Then I backed out, still keepin' hold of the log, while I had a look aroun'

I was goin' down the river about three miles an hour, but I saw that an outside passage would not do, for thar war houses in sight both sides of the river, and some people war workin' in the fields. I agin went into the cabing—this time feet fust.

I was now quite comfortable; for after having jist ben so near to losin' everything, I was not goin' to complain about the way I was obliged to travel.

I spect I must have been sleepin' on my watch, for I next foud my craft was taken persession of by two or three.

I could hear 'um talkin', and the log was nearly full of water agin. This, howsomever, didn't trouble me much, for I was down near the end of it, whar thar was plenty of room fur me to keep my head out o' water.

I soon found out that some boys who war amusin' themselves by havin' a swim had made a prize of my craft.

They war havin' a fine lark, and each was tryin' to put the others off the log. At last they all three got on to one end—the same end whar I was—and it went under, nearly drownin' me agiu.

Jist as I'd nearly lost my twelve hundred dollars' wuth of property, they let me have a taste of air.

I was afraid they'd drown me in their play, and was thinkin' of callin' out; but that would be but little better than bein' drowned. They'd put all the people iu the neighbourhood after me, and I'd be sent back to my old home.

I was close to the end, with my face up'ards, and I saw one of the boys. He was a-straddle of the log, and leanin' over the end. A boy's queeriosity was leadin' him to look into the holler log; he saw me—guv a scream, fell off the log, and sunk like a stone.

The boy could swim when he came off to the log; but the fright made him unable to do anything but to go straight down. The other boys swam ashore, and I went on.

A few minutes after, I came to a bend in the river, and the log struck the bank.

I crawled out, and hid amongst some bushes by the side of the river, and went to sleep. Jist as the sun was settin', a man waked me up with one of his boots.

"I guess, my boy," said he, "that you're travellin' by the underground railway."

I was thinkin' about makin' a rush away from him, but thar was somethin' in his looks that told me he was not a bad feller, and I thought I'd see fust whether he was or not.

"I'm tryin' to get norf, massa," said I, "and for the Lord's sake don't try to stop me."

"I don't want to stop you, my lad," said the man. "Go on to Canada, whar they worshup niggers: you're not wanted here. But I'll tell you what you'd better do. Half a mile up the river is a man who'll do somethin' for you. He lives in a large white house,—the fust you come to. Wait till it's dark, and then go thar. He helps run the *underground railway*."

He then went away.

I was a little afraid to go to the house, for fear I'd get into a trap and be sent back; but I'd got so far away that thar would be nothin' strange in findin' people who'd help me, and I went as he told me.

The people in the house were in great trouble. They had jist lost an only son—lost by bein' drowned in the river that afternoon, and several people were lookin' for the body.

Durin' the night the body of the boy was found in the river and brought home to his parents.

It was the same boy I had lately frightened, and my heart was burstin' at seein' their grief and knowin' that I'd partly caused it, and that they, even in their sorrow and trouble, had told me that I should be clothed, protected, furnished with money, and sent on to Canada. No one but me knew what caused the boy to sink as he did, and I would not say anythin' to explain the mystery.

The father and mother had been so kind to me, that I didn't like to say anythin' to them about it. I was sent to Canada, and from thar I went to New York and turned sailor. That's a great many years ago, and I've still got the twelve hundred dollars' wuth of property that I stole from my old master in Kentuck, but I don't think quite so much of it now as I did once. Property what kills people with fright who looks at it, is not quite wuth stealin'.

THE MUTINEERS.

THE WHALEMAN'S YARN.

THERE she blows! hurrah for a right whale! And now, lads, you shall have a right yarn—a reg'lar old salt-water, barnacle-backed whaler's yarn. I'm blest if I ain't had my iron in a few in my time! But, my lads, though I'm a whaler, this ain't so much a story about whales as about a set of mutineers, led on by the owdacousest and cruelest sea-shark as ever trod a deck.

Now to begin—and please don't interrupt, leastways, except to pass the grog-pannikin round once every two minutes, which won't be took offensive.

I was on board the whaler *Amsterdam*, of Boston—a Yankee whaler this was; we were bound for the South cruising-ground, which, as some of you know, is that part of the ocean off Chili and Patagonia, and near Cape Horn. We had put into Valparaiso for water and fresh provisions, and, at the time my yarn begins, were leaving that port. It was sunset, and daylight and the coast of Chili faded away together. Astern of us, rugged and rocky, was Point Angels—a dangerous headland, which we were fast leaving. Far away we could make out the dim outline of the great mountains—the greatest in the world, I'm told—the Andes. At length land and mountains all faded from our view, and night was on the sea.

Eight bells struck; the watch was set, and, it being my eight hours in, I went down to the forecastle, and turned into my bunk to do my allowance of sleep. Sleep! People on shore don't know how to sleep. A man should be a sailor—compelled to *sleep by the minute*, liable to be roused at a moment's warning—to understand what sleep is.

I was an A. B. on board, but it was my first whaling voyage. I had shipped for the fun of the thing. I wanted to learn how to catch whales and cat blubber. We were bound, as I have said, for the South cruising-ground—a favourite resort for whales, and, as a consequence, of whale ships. It's one of the finest parts in the whole South Seas, barring the gales of wind and icebergs we come across sometimes. I ask any sailor man among you who's been whaling down in those latitudes, whether he ever was happier in his life than when cruising off and on for whales on this ground?

There can be no harder service than catching whales, and probably none more dangerous. But, with all its dangers and hardships, there is a fascination in it which only those who have felt it can conceive. There is something noble and inspiring in capturing this monster of the deep. And when the toils of the chase are over, and John Whale is fairly "tried" into oil, then, in the depths profound of the fore-castle, we sailor men take our ease, smoke cigars, drink grog, and fight our battles over again—and sometimes fight new ones among ourselves.

In the *Amsterdam* we had a good share of the comforts of nautical life. She was a stout ship of five hundred tons burden, and carried thirty men—enough "beef," one would think, to work ship and fight her too, if need should be.

Captain Jones was a good sailor, and an honest and kind-hearted man; but nature never meant him for the commander of a ship. He was too easy with his men; nothing but the fear of a flogging will keep old sailors in order.

The second mate, named Field, was a wide-awake Yankee; but the first mate, Brown, was a devil incarnate.

He was a large, powerful man—much more so than either the captain or Field; and although he had been aboard but a week (he joined us in Valparaiso), he had begun to show that he intended to rule the ship himself, and I did not like the cut of his jib at all.

There were some rumours in Valparaiso that he had been a pirate, and his every look and action bore testimony to their truth; and before we had been out ten days he began to alter his conduct towards the captain, and seemed waiting for some pretext to quarrel with him openly. He went on, growing shorter and shorter with him, till one day, when we were four days out, he fairly showed his colours.

There were eight fellows aboard, all suspicious-looking craft, who shipped aboard of us at the same time that Brown did; and all the morning of this day he had been whispering with one and another of them.

I could not help thinking that there would be the devil to pay before long; but as he was very sly about it, his conduct was not generally observed.

About two bells in the first dog-watch that afternoon, Brown having the deck, Captain Jones stepped to the binnacle and stopped to look at the compass.

I was standing near at the time, and happening to look at

Brown, was taken all aback by the expression of his face; he looked at the captain just as if he was about to kill him. So satanic a look I never saw in the face of mortal man.

When the captain had satisfied himself that the ship was heading her course, he spoke to the first mate.

"How many is she going, Mr. Brown?"

"I know," said Brown, "and that's enough."

"Mr. Brown!" replied the captain, "what do you mean, sir? I command this ship."

"I'm d—d if you do!" said Brown, and, snatching up a heaver that lay near, he struck him on the head with all his strength.

Being bare-headed, and having nothing to break the force of the blow, the captain fell upon the deck, and never moved a finger. He was dead.

"Come aft here, Antonio," said Brown to one of his men, "and toss this thing overboard."

Having turned his pockets inside out, Antonio very coolly did as he was commanded.

"Now then," continued Brown, "call all hands."

All hands came on deck, and Brown, having his loaded pistols lying by him on the capstan, very deliberately told them that Captain Jones had been insolent to him, and that he had thrown him overboard; that he was now master of the ship, and would kill any man who dared to say a word.

"Do you hear that, Mr. Field?" he said to the second mate. "Mind that you behave well, or I will serve you in the same manner."

Field was as brave as most men, and looked for a minute as if he would show fight; but as he did not know whom he could depend upon, he merely answered "Yes sir," and went about his business.

As he submitted, all hands did the same, and things went on as if nothing was the matter.

But after dusk, in the second dog-watch, Field having the deck, I thought there was some unusual stir among five or six fellows who I knew were friends of his.

I watched them closer, and thought they were busy with a boat which hung on the lee quarter. They would toss something in, and then more, and I wondered what they were driving at; but in a few minutes all was quiet again; and soon after the bell struck eight, and the first mate came on deck to stand his watch as usual.

He looked pretty hard at Field as he made his report of courses, wind, etc.; but he was so very respectful, that Brown's suspicions were effectually lulled.

"Mr. Field," said he, "we shall have fine times now that old fool is out of the way; and when we get more southing, I mean to keep her away for the Cuachos Island, and there we'll take our comfort."

"That's a fact, Mr. Brown," said Field, "there will be some fun in that;" and he went below, as if he and the first mate were the best friends in the world.

The first watch passed off quietly enough; but I was too busy thinking to sleep, and was wide awake when we were called at eight bells.

As soon as the wheel was relieved, and Brown had gone below, Field spoke to us.

"My lads, she goes well. There won't be anything to do this watch, and you may caulk on the forecastle, if you like."

This was a common custom with the second mate in fair weather, and all the watch went forward accordingly, leaving only himself and the man at the wheel aft.

Still, I thought it meant something this time, and I lay down under the weather bulwarks, amidships, to see what was coming.

In about ten minutes, six fellows came along aft, one by one.

They went first to the wheel and lashed it amidships. Putting some things into the lee-quarter boat, they slushed the tackles and lowered it, and then, all getting in, they let her drop astern, and, as it was very dark, I saw no more of them, and quietly moored myself under the lee of the long-boat.

I knew that the second mate and his men were safe enough now, for we were not far from the coast of Chili, and a whale boat will live in almost any breeze.

With their sails and six oars, they could run away from us at any time, and it now occurred to me what they had been about in the evening, namely, putting provisions and water aboard; and so they were, right enough.

But the next question was, what would Brown do when he found it out? That remained to be seen; and I lay in very uneasy expectancy.

About six bells he came on deck.

"How do you head there?" said he to the man who was *not* at the wheel. Receiving no reply, he d—d the fellow as asleep, but

on going aft to wake him, he found that he and the second mate were among the missing, and the wheel lashed.

Nothing ever took him by surprise, and he hailed instantly, "For'ard, there!"

"Sir?" sang out one fellow from the forecastle, who happened to be awake.

"Come aft here, you d—d rascal!" said Brown. "Where's all the watch?"

"Mr. Field told us to caulk on the forecastle, sir," said the trembling sailor.

"The devil he did!" said Brown; "and where is he?"

"I don't know, sir," said the man.

"Well, who does know?" continued Brown. "Come aft here, all of you."

We went aft, but no one could tell him where the second mate was, and on mustering the watch he found that six men were missing.

He jumped to leeward, and sang out that the quarter-boat had gone. A moment after, the man at the wheel reported that one compass had gone from the binnacle.

"He's off in a boat!" said Brown; "but I'll catch him before morning. Call all hands—'bout ship—ready!"

We were standing at this time south-east-by-south, in a south-west wind, and the most natural conjecture was that Field had made for land; but, for that very reason, Brown thought it was not the fact; and, tacking the ship, he put her head due west, and crowded all sail.

There was so much promptness in Brown's manner that I was afraid he was right in his supposition; and as he swore he would run them down if he caught them, I waited anxiously for day.

Satan always favours his children, and so he did this time; for when daylight came, the boat *was* in sight, about four miles distant on our weather-bow.

I thought now that we should see some murder done, for Brown loaded his musket and pistols, and ordered us to clear away a twelve-pounder which was for'ard, and loaded it with grape-shot, nails, glass, etc.

But my fears were groundless, for as soon as Field saw us he struck his mast, and, taking to the oars, pulled dead to windward at ten knots an hour. That manœuvre was his salvation, for he had too much start to be chased by a boat, and the ship could not

conveniently sail in the wind's eye. So Brown, after swearing till he was black in the face, tacked ship again, and, giving up all hope of catching Field, stood south-east for Cuachos.

But he was too regularly mad to go off so, and, since Field had escaped him, he vented his rage against the men of our watch.

He shot one with his musket, and two more with his pistols, and, being somewhat appeased by the sight of blood, he then grew more good-natured, ordered them to be thrown overboard, with a jest, and then called all hands to splice the mainbrace.

But his good-nature soon evaporated, and he became as snappish as a hungry oyster. For three days he was constantly abusing all those whom he thought unfriendly to him, and threatening to kill them if they did not behave; and what with this abuse and uncertainty, I never spent three days so miserably in my life, and I never was more rejoiced at the sight of land than when Cuachos hove in sight.

Cuachos is a small uninhabited island, lying about 500 miles west-north-west from Chili. It has a very fine soil, producing fruit and vegetables in profusion, and droves of wild hogs are running about, to be had for the killing. We came to anchor in the harbour, and Brown gave all hands a run ashore—to take the turns out of their legs, he said, but in reality it was that he could search the ship.

When we had been there about a week, Brown began to take the spare spars and planks from the ship to build a house ashore, and said he intended to strip her and take her to pieces, and so we would all live there, and that he would be governor.

There was one thing about his plan of operations that I could not get along with—namely, his population were all men; and I very soon determined not to stay to be governed by that old devil on such terms.

I found one other fellow, Bill Stevens by name, who had come to the same conclusion.

But the question was, how could we get away? for all hands were with Brown, and we alone could do nothing.

But, after knocking our heads together awhile, we formed our plan. A pretty stiff one it was, too, but it was our only hope; and we stood by for an opportunity to put it into execution.

It was now summer (December), and as the wind in those seas blows steadily from the southward in the summer months, we concluded we could sail the ship into Valparaiso alone, if we could once

get her to sea; and as the harbour opened towards the north-east, we thought we could accomplish that too, if luck favoured us.

One morning, a few days after this, Brown ordered all the sails to be loosed to dry, and then went ashore with all hands, leaving Bill Stevens and myself aboard as shipkeepers, and remarking, as he went over the side into his boat, that he should run the ship ashore the next day high and dry, and then knock her to pieces.

"Now, Bill Stevens," said I, "it's our last chance; we must go to sea to-day or never."

"Aye, aye," said Bill, coolly, "we'll do that thing."

We lay at that time about half a mile from the shore, moored head and stern, with the ship's head towards the sea, and the yards were square, the wind filled the sails that hung loose, and by some unaccountable piece of good fortune they had all been hoisted after they were loosed to dry. Bill and I turned to, and, after belaying the traces, very quietly sheeted home the royals, and, as they filled, we found that the ship moved a little, and was getting over her anchor. That discovery made our hearts beat quick, but we had too much to do to give way to any emotion.

The anchor out ahead had a chain cable, but the kedge astern was fast to a hawser that was belayed round the capstan, which, as the ship urged ahead, was gradually tightening.

We unshackled the chain cable, and, putting mats in the iron hawse-holes to prevent any noise, let it run out slowly and carefully, and then cutting the hawse astern, we were FREE!

We lashed the helm amidships, sheeted home top-gallant sails, then topsails one sheet at a time. That was the decisive move; and the wind freshening at the moment, the ship gathered way, and began rapidly to leave the land.

We were not yet observed from the shore, and went on sheeting home one sail after another, as well as we could, and belaying the fore-tack and sheet, leaving the mainsail alone, in order that the foresail might draw. When we were about a mile from the shore, and under so much headway that we thought it was impossible for them to overtake us, we trained the twelve-pounder on the place where they were at work, and, having hoisted the national ensign at the peak, we fired the gun, and sent the grape-shot which Brown had intended for Field whistling about his own ears; and thus, in cavalier fashion, bade them "good-bye."

This made some dancing and swearing among them, but they immediately put off in boats and gave chase.

"Now then, Bill," says I, "mind your eye, for here comes a tussle."

"Aye, aye," said he, very coolly, as he swabbed out the old twelve, "lend a hand here, and we will sweeten them high."

We loaded her again with grape, nails, slugs, glass, and everything we could lay our hands on, filling her to the muzzle, and then loaded all the muskets aboard, of which, by good luck, there were more than half-a-dozen.

We went on making sail as well as we could, for we knew that if we were overtaken death, or worse punishment, as the laws of war have it, was the best we had to expect.

They came on after us very fast, and, as the wind had most unfortunately lulled considerably, they made two feet to our one, and it was very plain, that unless we could increase our speed, they would certainly overtake us.

We hauled the twelve-pounder aft, and, running its muzzle over the topsail, depressed it for a fire.

Getting our muskets also, we took our stand, determined to beat them off or die in the attempt.

There were now four boats hotly pursuing us, but the foremost one, which Brown commanded, was the only one which seemed likely to overtake us; and it did seem impossible for us to escape him, for he gained on us every minute. But when he was just within musket-shot of us the wind freshened suddenly, and for a moment we were slipping right away from him.

It was but momentary, however, for the wind lulled again, and he came on faster than ever.

Brown was standing in the prow of the boat—his musket in his hand; and, as he was to windward of us, we could plainly hear him, as he swore roundly that he would kill every d—d mother's son of us.

"Perhaps you will, friend Brown," thought I; "but that's a game that *two* can play at;" and asking pardon for the murder, I coolly took aim at him with the musket, and let drive.

I never missed my aim before, but he was under the especial protection of the devil. My ball did not touch him; while his, in return, just grazed my cheek—just drawing blood.

As he was loading, I fired at him again, and, although I never had a fairer shot, again missed him.

But the ball was not wasted this time.

It passed through the head of his bow-oarsman, and, as Brown

rose to fire at me again, his stroke-oarsman fell dead from the same cause, while Brown's ball passed through my hat, doing no mischief whatever.

I had now found the way to gain upon him, and that was to kill his men; and I put my knowledge into practice so effectually, that in five minutes he had only two oarsmen left.

At this juncture the wind freshened very much, for we were clear of the harbour, and in the open sea, and there could be no question of our final escape; so we gave him the pepper and salt mixture from the twelve-pounder, which disabled the rest of his oars. We then cheered him, and left him to found as many empires in the South Seas as he felt inclined.

But our work was only begun.

We were standing out to sea under a press of canvas, in a ship of 500 tons, to work which properly at least eighteen men were requisite. We were nearly a thousand miles from Valparaiso, and four hundred from the nearest port, Valdivia; and we two fellows were to work and navigate this ship into port as best we could!

That we were safe from Brown was an undeniable and most oyouous fact; but I must confess that we felt rather sad when we looked around at sunset, and saw nothing but sky and water; we felt that we were indeed alone. However, we plucked up courage, determined to do all that men might before we gave up.

The wind was, fortunately, perfectly fair; we had plenty of provisions and water, and the ship's quadrants, chronometers, charts, and compasses, were all aboard, and we both understood navigation. We knew that we could get along well enough if it was fair weather; but a gale of wind would send us straight to the bottom.

However, these anticipations were altogether out of place. We knew too much to borrow trouble, and determined to enjoy the present, and let the future take care of itself.

The devastations that we made among the cabin stores that evening at supper were neither few nor small. We ate fruit and drank wine, and were as jolly as if we were in port. "For who knows," Bill said, "whether you or I shall ever be skipper of a big ship again? Let's make the most of this one."

And we *did* make the most of it, with a vengeance. We got so gloriously fuddled, that when we awoke the next day it took us half an hour to bring us to our bearings.

After knocking about for five days more, we safely took the ship into Valparaiso. Now, we couldn't have done that if I hadn't been

a bit of a scholar, and known something of navigation. So none of you fellows ever laugh at a foremast-hand for studying book-learning.

We never heard of Brown and the survivors of the mutineers from that day to this. I reckon he didn't found much of an empire in the South Seas, or it would have been heard of before now.

That's all, mates—pass the grog.



THE PIRATES OF THE SOUTH SEAS.

THE MAN-O'-WAR'S MAN'S YARN.

WHEN I was a youngster—that is to say, just after I had for the first time shipped as ordinary seaman—I had a fancy for a cruise in a man-o'-war, just to see what it was like.

So I shipped on board the sloop-of-war, *Fox*, which was commissioned at Portsmouth for the South Pacific Station—that is to say, Valparaiso and the Chiliau coast, and so forth.

Now, though I had hitherto only shipped as O. S. on board merchantmen, I thought myself quite good enough to be rated A. B. on the books of a man-o'-war.

So, as I said, I joined the *Fox*, and we sailed for our cruising-ground. I had never been aboard a man-o'-war before, and everything was quite new and strange to me. The work was infinitely lighter than on board a merchantman, by reason of there being so many more men available. I had been accustomed to see three or four men pulling and hauling in halyards, getting in foot by foot with difficulty, and many a yo-ho! Now, I beheld a hundred tailed on to a rope, and at the sound of the boatswain's pipe, round went the yard, or up went the sail, as the case might be, the men walking away with the rope along the deck.

However, that's neither here nor there. As a youngster, I was always fond of sleep, and would take my ten hours off the reel without trouble, when I had the chance. A capital place for stealing a nap in harbour is the stowed fore-topmast staysail, as it lies rolled up in its netting. In harbour, mind, for at sea it's rather a dangerous place to "caulk" in. For why? Perhaps as you lie dreaming of home and Nancy, the order may be shouted from the quarter-deck—"Hoist the fore-topmast staysail!" The

halyards are manned, up goes the sail, and overboard the sleeper, if there be one.

But in harbour it's different, and there's no safer or more comfortable berth. One warm afternoon in July, I had there ensconced myself, and was soundly sleeping, bottling it off at a great rate of knots, I tell you. We were lying in Valparaíso harbour, and as there was nothing doing about the decks, I had watched my opportunity, and quietly ensconced myself in my favourite roost.

I was suddenly aroused from pleasant dreams, by a lash from a good-natured foretopman, who had come down the stay to inform me that the first cutter was called away.

Hurrying up, I heard the boatswain calling my number—for I belonged to the first cutter, and all but myself were at their posts.

"Jack Garnet! pass the word for Jack Garnet."

"Aye, aye, sir," I cried, running aft in a great hurry, with a wholesome dread of being black-listed.

"Tell you what it is, you sir," shouted the first lieutenant, "you must be more smart for the future, or you'll get a dozen some of these days."

"Aye, aye, sir," I replied, and took my place in the boat.

We shoved off, and gave way. We had no officer with us but a midshipman, and it was some time before I knew where we were going. After pulling for about half an hour, however, we came alongside a merchantman, which lay far out in the harbour. She had signalled to the sloop for assistance, a curious accident having occurred.

While sailing out of the harbour with all sail set, the tackle parted as she was casting the anchor, and down it went to the bottom, a good eighty fathoms, dragging the chain cable up from the chain locker after it by the shock and rush. She was only a barque, and short-handed, and found it impossible to heave her anchor up, so great was the weight of the eighty fathoms odd of chain cable. There she lay, her sails whipping the masts in fine style, everything having been let go by the run.

"You, Garnet, stay in the boat," said the mid, "and the rest of you come on board the barque with me."

"Aye, aye, sir!" I replied, not at all sorry for a chance of having my nap out, for I was still drowsy and heavy. The painter was made fast on board; and while the rest of the boat's crew were assisting to heave the barque's anchor, I coiled myself up in the stern-sheets, and indulged in a delightful snooze.

How long my slumbers lasted I don't know; but I was at length awakened by the rolling and pitching of the boat. Getting up and staring around, I found myself in a devil of a mess. Some one, in the hurry of duty on board the barque, had cast off the boat's painter, and the wind and tide both setting out of the harbour, I had drifted out to sea, and now found myself a couple of miles away from land, with a stiff breeze blowing, and drifting fast yet further out into the broad Pacific!

As yet I had not been missed. The getting the barque's anchor up was a long and tedious affair: and now, behold, I was at sea, and out of sight of the sloop and harbour, by reason of the jutting headland—Point Angel. It was necessary I should do something, as, if suffered to knock about broadside to the sea, the boat would soon be swamped. So I took the tiller, and steered her before the wind, as the only thing I could do. The breeze was strong, and its effect on the boat and my body was sufficient to send her along a knot or two an hour.

Pleasant, this—very!

To add to the uncomfortable nature of the situation, the sun was now setting, and shortly sunk to rest in a blaze of glory.

Then night deepened over the scene, and I found myself alone on the South Pacific in an open boat. The wind blew steadily in the same direction all night, and when morning dawned there was nothing to be seen of land.

The weather was fair, and as the breeze lulled, and the sun's rays poured down on me, the heat brought on an unconquerable drowsiness, and I yielded again to the fatal habit which had brought me to this plight—I went fast asleep.

My slumbers were dispelled by the report of a musket, and a voice hailing—

“Boat ahoy!”

I started up, and looked wildly around. I was still on the open sea, now calm and tranquil, while some fifty yards off a large brig was lying to.

I answered the hail, and in a few minutes a boat was lowered, and I was taken on board.

I congratulated myself on thus being saved from death by starvation, thirst, or drowning; and, after having swallowed a stiff glass of grog, proceeded to relate my story to the officer in command on the deck of the brig. While doing so, I noticed that the brig was large and heavy, mounted ten guns over her bulwarks.

having no ports, and was crowded with men. The officer, however, was in an excellent humour, and, after listening to my narrative, ordered me forward to get something to eat.

While so employed, I busied my brain wondering what vessel this could possibly be; suddenly I remembered hearing, in Valparaiso, about a certain piratical vessel which had been seen cruising off the coast of Peru.

The story ran, that many merchantmen had been plundered by her, but that no violence was ever offered to the officers, crew, or passengers by the pirates, unless they resisted; nor even then more than was necessary to overcome opposition. Cargo they never touched; what they wanted was gold, silver, and portable valuables; and when they got these, they always went off peaceably.

I had heard them spoken of as a horrid set of ruffians, commanded by a man of gigantic stature. It was said, too, that they spoke a strange language, none of them understanding either English, French, or Spanish; also that they were usually seen near evening; and that at night, if sighted, the brig would suddenly and mysteriously vanish.

I had heard, moreover, that the vessel was a brig, which sailed like the wind, carrying ten guns and a long twenty-four pounder.

This convinced me that it was, indeed, the notorious pirate with which I had fallen in.

I saw that she was heavily sparred, with masts raking and sharp bows; her beautiful "shear," too, and clean run, convinced me that she was a fast sailer. After I had eaten and drank to my heart's content, I was ordered aft to the captain, whom I had not yet seen. In place of a man of gigantic size, I saw a small young fellow, of slender form, delicate limbs, and a face so smooth and handsome as to give him a decidedly feminine appearance.

Having heard my story, he assured me I should be well treated, and asked what ships there were in the bay, whither bound, and so on; also whether I had heard anything about a pirate off the coast of Peru.

I told him that the British sloop-of-war to which I belonged, as also a fast-sailing frigate, had been despatched to these parts to protect merchantmen from this very pirate.

At this he seemed greatly amused. "Well, my lad," he said, coolly, "I don't mind telling you, this is that same pirate; but it will be a long time before they catch us. We are short of wood

and water, and are going to put into Valparaiso; we shall wait, however, till your sloop comes out."

It was now about an hour after noon, and the brig filled her maintopsails, and, with a brisk breeze, stood for Valparaiso, with her starboard tacks aboard. She sailed like a witch, but the wind fell light and baffling, so that it was not until the next afternoon that we made the harbour.

About 4 p.m. we entered the bay, and steered straight for my vessel, the sloop *Fox*. The long twenty-four was hauled aft, and pointed over the taffrail, and the rest of the guns cleared away and double-shotted.

I must say this puzzled me, for I could not believe the pirate captain seriously thought of fighting the *Fox*, inasmuch as the sloop's battery of twenty-four pounders would have blown us out of the water in five minutes. However, I posted myself on the forecastle, determined to see the fun.

When within a mile of the sloop, I perceived some commotion on board her, and the boat of the harbour-master, which was lying at the gangway, suddenly cast off and made towards us.

"What is the battery of the *Fox*?" asked the captain of the brig, coming up to where I stood.

"Twenty-four pounders, sir."

"Very good."

With these words he walked aft, and his next order was—

"Man the starboard battery!—stand by. Man the weather-braces! Hard up the helm!"

We were now within half a mile of the *Fox*, which as yet lay quiet, her sails loosed to dry, utterly unsuspecting of the audacious attack which was coming. The moment the brig came round, the order was given to fire each gun of the starboard battery as it came to bear, and then, as she wore round on the larboard tack, the captain himself pointed and let drive with the long twenty-four over the taffrail. This done, we were off, going two points free—standing out to sea.

I was speechless with astonishment at the audacity of this manœuvre.

The *Fox*, though taken by surprise, quickly beat to quarters, slipped her cable, hoisted jib and topsails, and gave chase. As she payed off before the wind, she opened with her larboard battery, but, as it happened, did no damage.

The brig had a start of a mile at least, and was, moreover, under

fine headway; so the sloop was under a great disadvantage, as she had to make sail and gather way. Her best game was to keep away a little, and if possible carry away some of the spars of the brig with round shot. But this, however, was not done—the captain of the sloop-of-war never doubting he could soon overhaul the brig. But in this he was mistaken; the brig sailed like a witch, and gradually slipped away, working further and further to windward. He carried on, however, with unabated zeal, though the brig gradually increased her distance from one mile to six or seven; and darkness found him still driving ahead, with every rag of canvas spread to the breeze, which was now a ten-knotter from the north-west.

It really seemed that the audacity of the pirate brig would escape punishment. When daylight was fairly gone, our captain had ordered signal lanterns to be sent up to the skysail masthead and at each yard-arm, in order to challenge the *Fox* to continue her chase; and now—eleven o'clock—the *Fox* being at least ten miles astern—he ordered mast and yard ropes to be rove, and all hands to “stand by to rig ship.”

This order brought me up all standing, for I could not imagine what was to follow; but his crew understood the thing perfectly. Some large spars were brought aft, double-purchase tackles were rigged on the mainmast and on the taffrail, hatchets were opened, and whips and top burtens rigged on the stays. Some hogsheads containing fireworks were tossed overboard, but kept in tow, and numberless other preparations made in less time than I can write them.

“All ready?” hailed the captain.

“All ready, sir,” was the answer from all parts of the vessel.

“Then fire!” he continued.

Every gun was discharged at once, and at the same instant the hogsheads astern blew up with a tremendous report, and the ocean and the firmament were illuminated with a ghastly blue glare, and all the lights aloft were extinguished, so that the next moment we were in darkness. The main and fore-royal and skysail masts and yards were then sent down, the mizen-mast stepped, a topmast and topgallant-mast rigged, and yards crossed, while the guns were all lowered into the hold. Davits were then made fast at the sides, and whale-boats run up at them, while others were placed keel up on the booms; and in fifteen minutes we tacked and stood towards the *Fox*, as complete a whaling ship as ever doubled the Horn. The tackles, etc., were then unrove, all hands but sixteen

sent below, the hatches put on, and away we bowled for the *Fox*. The captain then left the deck, the first mate taking the command; but he shortly after returned from below, dressed as a woman, and directed our motions, though all orders were given by the mate.

In half an hour we were near the *Fox*, on her weather-bow, standing as if to cross her wake. When within three hundred yards, she sent up a light in her mizzen rigging, and fired a gun, which in nautical parlance means, "Heave to; I wish to speak to you." We hove to accordingly, in true merchantman style, while the *Fox* backed her main-topsail, as became a crack sloop-of-war.

"What ship is that?" hailed her first lieutenant, in the short, peremptory manner becoming his dignity.

"The *Three Sisters*, of New Bedford," replied our first mate, taking the Yankee twang in a most admirable manner.

"Where are you from, and where bound, and what is your master's name?" continued the first lieutenant.

"I expect we're from a cruise," drawled the mate again, "bound to Valparaiso for wood and water; and our old man's name is Andrew Maxwell, at your sarvice."

"Have you seen a strange sail hereaway?" interrupted the commodore.

"Guess I see a clipper of a brig pretend to blow up half an hour ago; but she only made b'lieve, for I see her again cutting away to the nor'ard and east'ard pretty considerable fast, I expect," drawled the mate. "Howsomever, that was in the old man's watch, and he's turned in now, snorin' like a lobster, and I'll be darned if I want to call him, for he's as cross as the devil if you break him of his sleep—and his wife wouldn't like it neither, I guess; so I'd a leetle rather not, if it's all the same to you."

"Clap a stopper over all, you infernal Yankee!" hailed the first lieutenant; and then the sloop braced up again, and was off like a shot in chase of said brig, while we up sticks and bore away for Valparaiso. Here, then, was the secret of the pirate's constant escape from all pursuers; this change of form, which, of course, would deceive anyone, had deceived the commander of the *Fox*.

The next day, with only thirty hands to be seen, and looking like nothing but a whaler, we entered the port of Valparaiso,—not a brig, nor commanded by a handsome young man; for our acting captain had a face like a dead-eye, and our real commander played wife to him for the time being, and was as young and handsome

as ever. Some waggish persons, indeed, little thinking how truly they spoke, insisted that the said wife was to all intents and purposes the commander of the ship—since the captain had a way of saying, “I’ll ask my wife,” on all important occasions. At the end of four days, the said whaler having wooded and watered, etc., I was brought up on deck (for I, too, had been kept under hatches since our arrival, that I might not be seen by the loafers), and having been sworn to secrecy (which said oath, N.B., I kept), I was set ashore; and then the *Three Sisters* weighed anchor, and under a cloud of canvas stood out to sea, to recommence her fair-trading operations.

What became of her thereafter I cannot say; though I did hear that she tried her tricks a time too often, and that a “brig,” which she chased for a whole day, and finally overtook, proved to be the *Fox* sloop-of-war, which vessel paid off old scores by sending her to the bottom at the second broadside. However, the Pirate of the South Seas has never since been seen or heard of.

And that’s all I know about it, shipmates.



THE VALLEY OF THE GOLDEN SHADOW.

THE GOLD-DIGGER’S STORY.

I WAS, not very long ago, a resident in Mexico, where I found employment for a short period as an assayer of gold and silver, in connection with some of the more important mines. These mines were situated in a wild district, on the very skirt of the region inhabited by the *Indios Bravos*; and it was necessary for all parties concerned not only to be armed, but to live in a strongly fortified village, whence we rarely emerged, except in large parties, on our way to the mines, or to hunt for our food.

But for some time our care had relaxed. The Indians had received a severe lesson in our quarter, and we were led to believe that they would, for the future, cease to molest us.

Our amusements were not very varied, and it was one of our great topics of conversation, as well as an event looked forward to with eagerness, speculating on the arrival of the monthly caravan, which brought us provisions, and took away such gold and silver as had been collected in the meantime.

Not that we had no society. Though the great proportion of

the villagers were mere labourers—Mexican, Indian, and European—there was the inspector of the works, one Don Jose de Grazias, of ancient Spanish descent, who was certainly pompous and avaricious, but who had two attractions near that made us forget his other faults. These were twin daughters, whose rare beauty was the marvel of all who saw them.

They had no more than the ordinary Mexican education, which, as in all priest-ridden countries, is merely nominal; but they could not only embroider, play a tune on the guitar, and dance, but they could devote themselves to their father's comfort and happiness. As he possessed the only house in the village above a hut, I and a comrade, John Hunter, the book-keeper, lodged with him at so much a week, and had every opportunity to study their character and enjoy their intimacy.

Juanita and Meda—these were their names—both brunettes—were, though so much alike as to be not easily recognisable apart, somewhat different in character. The first-born, Juanita, was of a softer and more yielding character than Meda, who was firm, energetic, and the prop and mainstay of her father's house. I soon saw how things were, and that Jack Hunter—ours was an Anglo-Mexican company—had hopelessly lost his heart to Meda; though how an ill enough paid clerk could aspire to the daughter of an *hidalgo*, who was rumoured to be rich, was more than I could tell.

Still, it was quite clear that the young people understood one another, and trusted, as youth will, very much to the chapter of accidents.

I had an influence—a pair of blue eyes watching for me in England—which effectually guarded me against any dark maidens of the south, and so I was a quiet looker-on. Juanita and I were as brother and sister. I told her my position as an engaged man, and with a soft and angelic smile she agreed to be my *confidante*, and the depository of all my secrets.

We had become less cautious, I have said, and often went out in smaller parties than before to hunt and take horse exercise. In this particular I and Hunter were equally enthusiastic, and, mounting our shaggy ponies, would hunt the bison at least once a week.

It was about a year ago, or more, that one day, after an exciting chase, we found ourselves, with our dead buffalo, in the midst of a sinister solitude, where cliffs rose above cliffs and chasm alternated

with chasm, while a stream flowed through the midst. We looked up at the sky, and a rueful smile illuminated our faces as it became evident that we must pass the night there. But, experienced hunters as we were, we hesitated not, but at once selecting the shade of some gigantic pines, picqueted our horses, and proceeded to provide for such creature comforts as were possible, in the shape of food, repose, and fire.

We made our fire in a sheltered hollow, where it would be least observed; we cooked our bison beef, and piled up brushwood for bedding; and ere an hour had elapsed were smoking our pipes, and thinking of who should go down to the stream to fetch water to reduce the strength of our fiery *aguardiente*. I volunteered at last, and, moving quietly away from the camp, stood rooted to the spot. An Indian was approaching our retreat, and was already so close that any attempt to avoid him would have been useless. In a moment more, raising his right hand in sign of amity, he came near, and, setting down a large gourd of water, took up his seat by the fire.

He was of very gigantic proportions; his visage was long and angular, while its expression was grave, gloomy, and repulsive. His eyes were keen and searching, and revealed an indomitable spirit. He had a rifle on his shoulder, a stout hunting-knife, and tomahawk. He was evidently worn and fatigued, and took the food I offered him gratefully, as well as some spirits and water, after which he further honoured me by taking up my pipe.

"Broke arm—know how to mend—eh?" he suddenly blurted out, as if he thought that he had kept his counsel long enough.

We both eagerly threw on more fire, and proceeded to examine his arm. Jack Hunter had been a medical student before his adventurous spirit took him to Mexico, and he soon saw that it was both bruised and broken.

Still, with my assistance, and at the sacrifice of our silk pocket-handkerchiefs, we got it into place, and bandaged it up, after which we all retired to our couches and slept. We were stirring early, and saw at once, despite his stoicism, that the Indian was in a burning fever, and suffering intense agony. We accordingly gave up to him one pony—the other was loaded with bison beef and wild heifer—and thus, to the astonishment of the village, we made an entrance about mid-day.

The Indian excited a grimace from all; but the rights of hospitality are sacred, and he was admitted as our guest, and soon

walked about the place almost unnoticed. He, however, had a keen eye for everything, but what annoyed and made me uneasy was his admiration of Juanita—an admiration shown, too, by acts of courtesy and politeness very rare in an Indian—though some have been known to give way to the most insane fancies for white women. I think the chief, as he described himself, saw something in my countenance which looked like suspicion, and from that moment he ceased his attentions.

But now began the evidence of his cunning.

"Work all this way for gold?" he said one day to Don Jose.

"Yes, my friend," replied the other, in his own dialect; "one must work for a living at something. As well dig gold as do anything else."

"Why dig gold? In my country we could pick it up in handfuls. Have you never heard of the Valley of the Golden Shadow?"

"Yes," said Don Jose, greed and avarice sparkling in his eyes, "I have heard of it, but of none who ever returned from finding it."

"I am a chief, and I have slain all who have dared to venture into my territory," said Jokero, proudly.

"Why tell me this?" asked Don Jose, fiercely.

"I may not wish to kill all who would reach that valley, where the gold lies in flakes and lumps upon the ground. If you will do as I wish, you shall have the Golden Valley to yourself."

"What wish you?" whispered the other, in a voice tremulous with anxiety.

"In my country I am a great chief; I have a wigwam as big as yours; I have slaves, white and brown. A thousand warriors obey my commands, and no one dares enter my country save with my permission. But my wigwam is empty—I want a wife. Give me the pale-face daughter, and you shall have the valley—yours, wholly yours, and my people shall guard you, and all you need to help you."

Don Jose covered his face with his hands.

"And this story of the valley is true?" he gasped, after a pause.

"An Indian never lies," was the reply.

"Much gold?" repeated the miser.

"Enough to fill one of the big ships from the old country," said the Indian, sternly.

"Then my daughter shall be yours," was the reply of Don Jose de Grazias.

A savage gleam shot across the face of the Indian—a gleam of

mingled delight and ferocity, which, however, vanished as quickly as the shadow of a summer cloud passing over the flower-spangled prairies.

"When will you take me to this place?" continued the Spaniard, now wholly given up to that grasping lust of gold, which, when it influences a man beyond the mere necessities of life, is so utterly degrading. To wish for money to provide for one's family or oneself, is one thing; while to wish for it merely for the sake of the lucre itself, is another. Just as to possess too much is enervating, so is the craving desire utterly debasing.

"We will start to-morrow night, if we agree as to terms," replied the Indian

Then followed a long discourse, a mixture of craving on one side, and of craft on the other, which ended, as nearly all such contests end, in the triumph of the latter.

John and I were up betimes on the second morning after. Nothing had occurred to excite my suspicions, except that I had imagined Don Jose much preoccupied, and had, while vainly trying to play a game of chess, heard him several times mutter to himself, "The Golden Valley—yes, the Golden Valley!"

We had thought of an hour's wild-fowl shooting on a large pond in the centre of a swamp, and were already accoutred, when Meda came out, pale and anxious—in reality, breathless.

"Have you seen father?" she asked.

"No—why?"

"Father, Juanita, and the Indian are missing; and some of my sister's clothes, and a couple of travelling-sacks, and three horses."

Neither I nor Jack Hunter could speak for a moment. He, poor fellow! could understand nothing; but I had at once a flash upon my brain which revealed to me something of the truth. I had seen the evident admiration of the Indian for Juanita, and I had noticed the eager conversations which had passed between the Indian and the old man; and then the words "Golden Valley" were a revelation.

"When did they go?" I eagerly inquired.

"Alas!" said Meda, with tears streaming from her beautiful eyes, "I know not. I have been up an hour, and at once missed Juanita. It was only by accident that I found that father and the Indian had gone also, with the horses. What am I to think?"

"Meda," I solemnly answered, "I know where they are gone,

and if Jack here will support me, will find them, or perish in the attempt."

Both looked at me amazed, and almost doubtful; but in a very few words I made them aware of my reasons.

"But why take Juanita?" asked Meda. I had not alluded to that feature in the matter.

"The Indian loved her," I replied.

"And you speak thus coolly—you, because of whose coldness she was dying of a broken heart!" exclaimed Meda, indignantly.

"Dear Meda," I said, gently, "you have said what I hope is not true, as Juanita knows me to be affianced to an English girl. But I, too, love her as a sister, and will devote my whole energy now to restore her to you, and to lead your father from his foolish infatuation. The Indian has lured him as with an *ignis fatuus*. But who knows anything of this gold country?"

After some consultation, Meda suggested calling into our council Pepe, a civilised Indian, who, without any circumlocution, told us that Storm-cloud was the fierce chief of the most remote tribe of *Indios Bravos*, a man renowned for his hatred of the whites; at the same time that his wigwam was never without a white squaw, generally so beautiful as to excite universal admiration. He knew the direction of the Golden Valley, but positively declined to guide anybody on such a wild-goose chase.

"But find it we must," I said to Jack, "and if necessary, we must tie this Indian on a horse, and make him lead us."

"Bribe him," replied Jack, who had been so amazed and puzzled as only just to have recovered his faculties.

But even bribery has its limits, and Pepe would not for a long time assent to this plan. He would lead us to the line of hills in which the Golden Valley is situated; he would point out the spot where it lay, under huge, peaked mountains, and then he would leave us to our fate, which he clearly expected would be a tragical one.

This settled, we saddled three sturdy mustangs, took an ample supply of ammunition, as much food as we could conveniently carry, and sallied forth early the next morning on our adventurous and really dangerous expedition. Pepe, as cunning an old scout as ever lived, never hesitated one moment on his journey. He seemed to know his way by intuition, and pointed out to our unsophisticated eyes the most unmistakable evidences of the presence of the party who preceded us. They had not travelled very

fast, because of the gentle Juanita, but still they were ahead of us. Jack said little, but he was resolved and determined.

"I mean to have that Indian's top-knot," he said.

And when Jack said a thing, it was his habit to consider it as good as done. Meda wished to accompany us, but this he would not listen to, as it would, he said, have unnerved him.

Nine days through the wearisome long desert we journeyed, over ground never trodden except by the Pilgrims of Death. Of this we had evidence enough, as here and there, to the right, to the left, we found the remains of the numerous victims who had fallen a prey to the monster devourer—now a human skeleton, and now that of some faithful animal that had accompanied its master—always, however, a horse or a dog.

Food was scarce for men, but still more so for the horses, who for two days had lived on nothing but *cacti*; when we reached the verge of a plain, which looked like nothing else but a sea of stone, and a sea, too, in a dead calm. It was boundless, endless, apparently without horizon. It was—we knew it without asking—the *Pampas del Muerte*, over which even birds will not fly.

"Behold the Golden Valley!" said Pepe, pointing to a white cloud in the distance.

"But that is only a cloud."

"Mountain," replied the Indian. "Pepe go back here; no cross Death Prairie for all the gold in valley."

And, having kept his promise, he quietly lit his pipe, and trotted away as coolly as ever did Sancho Panza on his ass, leaving us to do the best we could. The man had kept his promise, however, and brought us actually to the last camping-ground of the miser, the chief, and the young girl. There were even remnants of a little hut that had been built for her, and signs innumerable when dictated by the Indian.

"This is what our American friend would call a peculiarly perplexing predicament," said Jack, who was always hearty; "our grub is out—that accursed plain to cross, and no trail. What is to be done?"

I really had no advice to give. Hunger is the most miserable sensation in the world, and the most enervating—and I was hungry. The prospect of a ride across the Plain of Death in that state of body was simply horrible.

"We must find some food," grimly observed Jack: "a toss up who shall shoot the other. Ah! follow me."

And away he went in the direction of a long, low line of willows, that clearly indicated water—something worth knowing, as hunger was better than thirst. Jack never spoke unnecessarily, and on this occasion said nothing; but clutched his double-barrelled and crept on with the astuteness and cunning of an Indian. Suddenly he lifted his gun in a warning way, and I crouched down in an agony of expectation; for I, too, had seen a large mountain elk feeding on the banks of the stream.

“Down—the Lord be praised!” said Jack, as the echo of his two barrels died away.

Well—we didn’t march that night. We had been so starved for several days that we, perhaps, overdid it; but we did feed!—elk steaks, elk soup made in a tin pannikin out of the marrow and brains and such little odds and ends, producing a delicious result, which only a hungry man can appreciate. The result was natural—we slept heavily, but rose refreshed to prepare for our fearful journey. The horses had found something to crop on the banks of the river, and also plenty of water, so that we started with something like hope. We, too, had plenty of water, and an ample supply of elk.

Well, if I were to tell you all we suffered on that plain, *sixty miles in extent*, I should keep you all night. Twenty miles from the mountain, which was then clearly visible, the horses gave out. There was a patch of grass, with two or three trees, about the size of an English lawn, and the animals simply laid down, and would go no further. There was a small well, too. Nothing could be done but leave them there, while we trudged over the stony desert with sore feet and aching hearts.

Two days it took us; and when at last we were within reach of a small gully, like a gap in the mountains, two more ghastly, dilapidated beings were never seen. But we found water, some trees, and had still a portion of our elk left. We dropped on the ground from sheer exhaustion. It was about midnight when we awoke, and, to our no small gratification, saw three horses grazing near us. They were the missing nags from the fort. Without a word we caught them, found they were ready saddled and bridled, and hopped them.

Jack now quietly examined his gun, passed his thumb along his knife, and led the way down the gap in the hills.

This was the Golden Valley; a dreary, bleak, miserable-looking place, and yet, a mere cursory examination of the first lump of

stone told its story. *We were walking on gold!* Suddenly we halted. We had reached a spot where the ravine was like a city street. It was only ten feet wide, with perpendicular sides, widening, however, immediately afterwards. The moon now lent its lustre to the scene, and even its cold beams brought out the sparkles of the precious metal. Before us was an oval spot literally strewn with nuggets, which, during severe storms, had fallen from the rocky quartz formation, and there all was black.

A shadow had passed over the valley, and the nuggets and gold-dust shone no more.

At the same moment, a soft, sweet, and well-known voice began to sing—a song of love and devotion, in the Spanish tongue. I was about to rush forward, when Jack, with an iron grasp, clutched my shoulder; and as he did so, a second shadow crossed the open space.

I followed the direction of his gun-barrel.

On a ledge, between the moon and the stony clearing, sat Juanita; her arms tossed and waved about as she sang, in a way that clearly indicated that she was mad; and over her, with folded arms, stood Storm-cloud. He was so close, we could see the working of his countenance. There was a longing expression of face, accompanied by a kind of still horror, which told its own story. The man loved her, in his coarse Indian way; and now her madness, the result of his own brutality, doubtless gave him that deep concern which is often felt by his race for beings from whom Heaven has taken the light of intellect, which, in the human body, is the oil to the otherwise useless wick.

Next instant there was a fearful shriek and a horrible groan, as Storm-cloud fell back with the contents of two barrels in his chest. We darted forward, and found, on clambering to the ledge, that the Indian, though with his fierce gleam on his face, was dying.

I turned to assist Juanita, who was insensible; and—well, God forgive him! he had provocation enough—while I raised her up, Jack coolly scalped the Indian, and hung the scalp to his belt, whilst the miserable wretch was still conscious.

Juanita soon revived, but she knew us not. We asked for the hidalgo, and she laughed.

“He’s found the gold, and I am Queen of the Indios!” she said, with a cunning smile. “Let’s find father.”

We did find him—stretched out dead from the blow of a tomahawk; he lay on his face, grasping a mound of gold, and, as we found next day, when death released its victim from her misery, and left one lucid moment, was killed in the daughter's presence by the malicious Indian.

"Now you've got your Valley, keep it!" he said brutally, as he brained him. "I've kept my promise."

That death-bed I shall never forget. The darling girl seemed happy during the short lucid interval which preceded her decease, and she exhaled her last breath on my shoulder. I never felt before, and hope never to feel again, the amount of mental suffering which her last moments caused me.

"I always loved you, Harry," were her last words; "and as you did not love me—it's best so."

Though we loaded our horses with the crude gold, and took away as much as possible from the accursed place where we buried the beautiful Mexican, we made no very great speculation. We did not go away empty-handed, as far as a few thousands are concerned; still, we did not get very much gold out of the valley, though we took some; upon which Jack, after exhibiting the promised scalp to Meda, married and returned to England, where I expect to find them shortly, as happy as turtle-doves. When he left, I cleared out everything, and went to the Australian diggings: and between you and me, mates, what I *did there is nothing to nobody*.



For the last half-hour or more the ship had been rolling heavily, for the wind having hauled dead aft, a thick mist enveloped sea and sky, so dense and cloud-like that it was impossible to see a hundred yards ahead.

Suddenly it fell dead calm, and a small drizzling rain commenced to fall. At six bells a light breeze arose from the south, and increased momentarily in strength. It had been calm for about an hour, and the dense fog hung over the vessel like a pall. But before this fast-rising breeze it was rolled back; and the sea, in the direction whence came the wind, began to be visible.

Gradually and steadily the curtain of mist was dissipated, and the white-crested waves to windward could be distinguished, proving that the wind was rising fast.

In the fore-castle, the jovial company, warmed by grog, and exhilarated by the yarns spun, had just freshened the nip all round; and another of their number was about to commence spinning a cuffer.

As the wind rose, the ship heeled over, and the splash of the water could be again heard against her bows as she plunged through the waves.

"Hurrah, my lads! on she goes again! We shall be in the Channel by morning. Let's have a song. You, Hallelujah Jack, give us 'Homeward Bound.'"

"Yes, Jack," squeaked Cock Robin, from his perch on his shoulder; "I'll help you with the chorus."

At this there was a laugh, and big Jack was just about to commence, when the attention of all was attracted by the shout of the look-out man—"A light on the lee-beam!"

Then followed a clattering of feet, as men crowded to the lee-bulwarks to have a look at the said light, and decide as to its nature.

The wind freshened suddenly, and the mist drove rapidly away. Next came the cry—"Land, ho!—land on the lee-beam!"

Hushed were the notes of the song which Jack was just commencing, and a rush on deck was made by all. A gust of wind broke on the vessel, and the word was given—"Clew up the top-gallant sails!"

While the men were aloft furling the sails, there came a cry from the fore-topgallant yard—"Breakers on the lee-bow!"

A thrill shot through the vessel at this ominous announcement. "Lay down from aloft!—all hands about ship!"

By the time the crew were at their stations, the mist had been entirely swept away, and there in all its naked ruggedness lay the high, black-looking coast, fringed by a line of white—the dreaded breakers. Each moment the gale increased in force, and by the time the ship was put about, a furious storm swept over the sea.

"All hands reef topsails!" the skipper shouts through the trumpet.

"How many reefs, sir?" asked the mate.

"Double reef the fore and mizen topsails, and single reef the main topsails; reef the foresail, and set the reefed spanker. We're in for it now, and must carry on, and claw off this coast," the captain added, uneasily.

"There's a nasty sea, sir," the mate said, gravely; "the baro-

meter is falling fast, and the wind is rising. Do you think she can carry so much sail?"

"She must, by heavens, or we shall go ashore! In case of the worst, see to the ground tackle, and the moment the crew have reefed, let them get the best bower over the bows, and range a hundred cables of each chain along the deck."

The sails were reefed, and then the order was given about the anchor and cables. It cast a gloom on all hands.

"Anchor!" muttered the boatswain; "if it comes to that, we're in a bad way; such a sea as this would sweep clean over her, and tear the ship's bows out!"

Each minute the fury of the gale increased; the vessel heeled over and plunged through the waves, her masts and timbers groaning and creaking dismally. The captain looked extremely anxious, and went down with the mate to consult the chart.

"This land must be part of the iron-bound coast between the 'Start' and the 'Lizard.' If we can only beat off yet a couple of miles offing, all will be well," said the mate.

"How, in the devil's name, could we have got so far to the nor'-cast?" said the skipper.

"Currents and dead reckoning have done it," said the mate, drily; "we've had no observations for three days, and are about sixty or seventy miles wrong in our latitude and longitude, as by account."

Meanwhile the gale increased to furious strength, and the vessel plunged and laboured so heavily as to ship green seas over the bows. The captain was putting up the chart, and the mate, as he was about to go on deck, said, "We can't carry all this sail much longer, sir."

"She must—she must! We must make an offing."

"The foremast, sir?"

A furious gust at this moment nearly threw the vessel on her beam-ends, and a great sea broke on board over her bows, sweeping the decks, and driving the sailors to the rigging. Then there was a terrible sound—a loud report, like that of a cannon, followed by the crashing of timbers and the flapping of canvas.

Mate and skipper, pale as death, rushed on deck to see the extent of the disaster. Alas! an irreparable one. The foremast had gone just below the fore-yard, and all the upper masts and yards lay over the lee-bow, a mass of confusion. This was not all; in its fall it carried also that of the main-topmast,

For one moment the captain stood and surveyed the scene of wreck. Meanwhile, the ship, relieved from the pressure of the headsails, came up to the wind; the mainsail and sails on the mizen were taken aback; and thus she commenced to drift rapidly towards the breakers, whose ominous roar could now be heard.

"Stand by the anchor!—clear the chain-cable from the wreck, and let go!"

It took full five minutes with hatchets and handspikes to clear the chain.

"Let go the anchor!"

Down went the best bower, and eighty fathoms of cable rattled over the windlass with a noise like thunder.

"Clear away the sheet-anchor!—bear a hand—get up a hundred fathoms of the port chain. Work, men—work for your lives!"

And the men did work, as only those in the same desperate strait can.

At last the starboard anchor brought her up. She quivered all over, and plunged like a restive horse.

"It holds—it holds!" the captain shouted joyfully; and then glanced over his shoulder, where, dead astern, the waves roared on the rocky coast.

And now commenced a desperate struggle between the elements and the imperilled ship.

"All ready with the sheet-anchor, sir."

"Then let go!"

She has another anchor now to depend on; and thirty more fathoms of the starboard cable being payed out, she is riding with a hundred and ten of one and thirty of the other. Fearfully she plunges, her bows burying themselves beneath the great white-crested green waves, which come surging on, and sweep her decks. Fiercer and fiercer rages the storm; the crew are driven to the rigging, and it is impossible to stand on any portion of the deck except the high poop. The seas have long since swept away the cabin bulkhead, and the cuddy is deluged with water.

Women are shrieking, children crying, men praying. Each moment the case grows more desperate.

The captain and mate on the poop let off rocket after rocket, and fired a small cannon at minute intervals, as signals of distress.

Suddenly she ceases pitching so violently, and rides, as it were, easily on the waves, which no longer sweep over her decks. A cry of joy escapes from some of the passengers; they think, poor

souls! that the storm has abated. The captain knows better. He gazes in the face of his chief officer, and, a deadly pallor overspreading his own, utters these fatal words—"All is lost!—the cables have parted!"

In ten minutes more the *Trafalgar* has struck on a reef of rocks about a quarter of a mile from the shore. The waves make a clean breach over her forward, and by the tremendous thumping and grinding, it is obvious she must very quickly go to pieces.

A loud dismal wail ascends from the unhappy passengers. The crew, clustered in the rigging, await their fate calmly, silently, as sailors should.

Suddenly there came over the sea a shout; it is repeated—again and again, each time nearer and plainer.

Hurrah!—the life-boat!

Their signals have been seen, and there is yet a hope.

Vigorously impelled by the strong arms of a dozen men, the life-boat is seen struggling desperately through the surf. Nearer—nearer—till at last it lies under their lee.

"The passengers first!" the captain shouts; "and, first of all, the women."

It took two trips to rescue all the passengers, and then the boat returned for the crew.

"The larboard watch first!" cried the captain. "Mr. M'Donald, take command of your watch, and save yourselves. I will remain with the other watch; she will hold together one more trip."

No time was lost in vain talk; and in a quarter of an hour all the passengers and more than half the crew were landed safely, but bruised, wet, cold, and miserable.

All the while the gale raged with momentarily increasing fury. On the last trip, it was with the utmost difficulty the vessel could be reached, on account of the surf which raged over and around her.

When the life-boat returned for the captain and the other half of the crew, the mainmast, the mizenmast, and the stump of the foremast had also gone by the board. The wreck lay on her side, tossed and heaved about in such a manner, that it was impossible the boat could get close; certain destruction to all must have been the result.

The ship was now rapidly breaking up, nothing but her poop being visible above the waves, which made a clean dash over waist and bows. The life-boat came as near to the wreck as it was pos-

sible to do, and then they shouted to the crew to leap into the sea one by one, and they would pick them up. One by one the sailors dropped into the boiling surf, and, fortunately, all succeeded in being hauled on board the life-boat.

"Thank Heaven, I've saved all hands!" cried the skipper, who was the last to leave the ship.

No—not last, although he thought so. There came a shrill wail from the deck; and there, clinging to the boat's davits on the poop, over which the waves now washed, was poor little Cock Robin. He was so small, and having crawled for safety and warmth into the binnacle, which was strongly built and yet stood, had been overlooked.

"Jump! jump!" cried a dozen voices.

Thus urged, he gathered himself up, and leaped into the sea. He failed, however, in clearing the hamper of ropes and spars, and, getting entangled, clung desperately to the mizen-topsail yard. Other spars, splinters, and thick ropes were dashed against his frail body, and it soon became quite apparent that he had not strength to extricate himself.

"Pull up closer, you men! Let's save the poor little boy's life; he is but a child, and I promised his mother to bring him safely home."

They pulled up close amidst the roaring surf, which the storm and wind threw over the life-boat; but though they could see the poor lad gazing pleadingly at them, and hear his faint, wasting voice, it was absolutely impossible to reach the place where he clung to the mizen-topsail yard, close under the quarter of the now fast breaking up vessel.

"Cock Robin!" shouted Big Jack, "let go, and try to swim towards us."

But he either could not hear or had not strength enough.

"I won't see him perish like that, if I lose my own life."

The next instant Hallelujah Jack was battling with the surf and striking out vigorously to reach the lad.

It was a difficult task; not only by reason of the sea and surf, but the pieces of wreck, spars, masts, and ropes which were tossed wildly about by the waves.

A cheer broke from those in the life-boat. The sailor had reached the lad, who clung around his neck. Then the sailor struck out to return to the life-boat, a distance of only a dozen yards. All at once he cried out, and then his head disappeared.

But he rose, and as he feebly endeavoured to reach the boat, it was seen that the blood streamed down his face. Again he disappeared beneath the surface, and Cock Robin was washed from his hold, to be grasped in a few moments by strong arms, and hauled on board the life-boat.

"Save him—save Jack!" was his first cry, as he gained breath.

For a moment or two the big sailor could not be seen; then there was a shout, and a few strokes brought the boat alongside a piece of wreck to which the sailor clung, nearly in a state of insensibility. He was hauled on board, and then it was found that he had been dreadfully injured—his body having been jammed between two pieces of mast or wreck.

In ten minutes the life-boat reached the shore, and very shortly afterwards the ship went to pieces. There remained nothing of the gallant ship *Trafalgar* but bits of wreck and floating spars which the waves cast on the beach. A few hours ago, all was life and mirth on board; her crew and passengers looked forward with joyful hope to the happy day when they should set foot on the shores of old England. Now, bruised, wet, cold, miserable, and bereft of everything, they had reason, while thanking Providence and the life-boat, to contrast their present position sadly enough with what it was a few short hours back.

Poor Hallelujah Jack died from his injuries shortly after he was carried on shore, to the bitter grief of his little friend Cock Robin, whose life he had saved at the cost of his own. On the anniversary of the day of the shipwreck, the cabin-boy—who went to sea no more, his mother having inherited a moderate fortune from a relative—visited the little churchyard at Falmouth, and strewed autumn flowers on the grave of Hallelujah Jack.

And what of the story the cabin-boy promised? This story of the loss of the *Trafalgar*, from Melbourne, homeward bound, written by himself years afterwards, is Cock Robin's story.

XIV.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT SEA.

TWO TOUGH YARNS.



IN the month of October, 1862, I found myself in the town of Melbourne, Australia, not over well stocked with money. As I had been to sea, and was capable of shipping as A. B., I did so, in preference to paying my passage home to London, where I wished to arrive as soon as possible. One of the advantages of a knowledge of seamanship—in fact, an early nautical education—is this: any one who is competent to ship as an able or ordinary seaman can get transported to any part of the world, and, in place of incurring expense for his passage, can depend on getting paid for his services. So I shipped on board the *Polynesia* barque, 700 tons burden, bound from Melbourne to London. The days had gone by when, at the height of the gold fever, seamen could command eighty, ninety, and a hundred pounds for the “run home,” as it was called, but still a very handsome sum was offered and freely paid. We had on board the *Polynesia* a very motley, but, nevertheless, a very good crew on the whole. Our skipper was a Scotchman, and, though close, was a good seaman and a just man. The chief mate was not a bully, and, so long as the work was done, did not interfere; and the second mate, Jack Rawlins, was a thorough good fellow, and universally liked. And now, after this brief introduction, we will get on to our Christmas Eve at Sea, and chronicle two of the yarns spun in the forecabin.

On the 24th of December, 1862, the good ship *Polynesia* was bowling along towards the equator, having rounded Cape Horn, and, with all sail set, making the best of the south-east trade wind,

which was blowing strong and steadily. We had a stove in the forecastle, in which there burned a beautiful bright coal fire. Well, about "seven bells," in the second dog-watch (half-past seven in the evening), the second mate, Jack Rawlins, came forward and informed us, as we were taking our supper, that the captain had ordered the steward to serve out half-a-pint of rum to every man, and provide as much lime-juice and sugar as we might require. It was understood that we should have the evening and night to ourselves, as far as was compatible with the safety of the ship. There was a man at the wheel, another on the look-out, and, with the exception of the chief mate, there was no one else on the deck. Merrily the good ship bowled along, the favouring trade wind blowing about a point abaft the beam.

The grog was served out—half-a-pint to each man—and quickly brewed and discussed. It was only nine o'clock, and the grog-kettle was empty.

"Wall, I rather think the skipper mout ha' made it a pint, 'stead of just a taste apiece, anyhow," remarked a tall Yankce, who had shipped under the name of Bill Jones. "I bin aboard a few hookers in my time, but never come across such a dotrotted mean ole cuss as this one."

"Now, Bill Jones, stow your growling; you're always at it, like a bear with a sore head."

"An' enough to make a feller growl—over six foot four, and only half-a-pint!"

"An' a darned ugly, knock-kneed, slab-sided six foot four you are, Bill Jones; cuss me, if I had sich a frame, if I wouldn't pawn it and lose the ticket."

This speech was from another Yankee, one Sam Smith—at least, he shipped as Sam Smith, and so signed his name in the articles. These two were perpetually having wordy conflicts together. Both were sharp and shrewd, and had an abundant fund of wit at command; indeed, they proved a never-ending source of merriment by their bickerings and interchange of chaff. The two men were as different in appearance as it is possible to conceive. Bill Jones was, as he said, over six feet four in height, with long, sinewy arms, like those of the ourang-outang or the newly-discovered gorilla; his legs ill-made, and, as Sam Smith said, slab-sided and knock-kneed. He was immensely powerful; indeed, Bill Jones's pull on a rope was as good as that of two ordinary men. A long, lean face, with cavernous jaws, prominent cheek-bones, and head

which came up to a peak behind, made him a curious object to behold. His walk was something between a trot and a shuffle, but somehow or other his great carcass got over the decks as quickly as most. He had a long beard, or rather tuft, but no whiskers; this gave him a very curious expression—indeed, quite comical, and when he grinned, to avoid laughing was almost impossible.

As for his mental peculiarities, the only ones we need here dwell on were his quaint humour and stolid good-temper and inveterate habit of lying. Indeed, in this latter accomplishment all were agreed that no soul on board was in the same street with him—*except* the other Yankee, Sam Smith. Each had their partisans, some declaring that Sam—or as he was called from his small size, “Cockroach”—was the champion; others maintaining that “Pelican,” as Bill was nicknamed, could spin the toughest yarn ever heard on board ship. Cockroach presented a remarkable contrast to his countryman. He was, at the outside, five feet two, compactly built, and not weighing more than eight stone, while the other would certainly have pulled down double that weight. He was active and agile as a squirrel, and, despite his small size, a very efficient seaman, and always worth his “wage.”

A favourite topic for chaff with each was the size of the other. The little one declared that “the slab-sided ghost was a cross between a cow giraffe and a gum tree,” while Tom was not slow to retaliate in kind on the “darued little shrimp,” as he familiarly called him.

“I tell you what it is,” said the second mate, after some desultory chaff, and discussion as to the absence of the needful to have another kettle, “let’s have a yarn all round. I’ll get some more grog, and the man who tells the ‘toughest yarn’ shall have double allowance all the rest of the passage. I’ve got a private stock myself, and I’ll stand for the sake of hearing a regular suorter.”

“An’ you shall have it, by thunder!” cried the little Yankee, “sure as my name’s Hiram Abiram Vonslammer.”

“An’ I’ll put the stuns on yourn, Cockroach, as sure as my name’s Josephus Jehoram Jamsnorter.”

There was great merriment at these outlandish names; and the second mate said, as the laughter subsided—

“That’s a sweet name of yours, Cockroach. Why didn’t you ship under it?”

“It air a nice name, now, ain’t it?” he replied, with affected pride; “a feller wi’ a name like that mout be anything he liked, up

to President o' the Yeunited States. An' as to why I didn't ship under it, it's too good a name to be bruited about anyhow. Whar I wur riz they stuck another on, but I dropped it. 'Taint well to be *tu* all-fired and proud."

"What was t'other name?"

"Hiram Abiram Ripslasher Vonslammer, in full. They runs together very well; but I'm content wi' three."

"I'll bet a week's grog on Hiram Abiram Ripslasher Vonslammer," said the boatswain; "a man wi' a name like that can't lose."

"An' I'll stand to Josephus Jehoram Jamsnorter. I like the ending, Jamsnorter—like the sound o' a bull bellowin' through a speakin'-trumpet."

"Cockroach sails round him, I'll bet!"

"Pelican goes ahead, wi' a reef in his topsails, and a spare topmast towing astern."

At last silence was restored, and the contest began. Although it was universally believed that the palm lay between the Yankees, several others volunteered yarns, some of which were pretty stiffish. The boatswain told how he was sucked down the maelstrom; but when asked how he got up again, said he "was blowed if he knew; he *riz* somewhere, he supposed." This was voted unsatisfactory. Another told a wonderful adventure with an iceberg. However, we will dismiss these, and get to the two tough yarns.

HIRAM ABIRAM VONSLAMMER'S PRIZE YARN.

"I wur riz in the State o' Maine, whar they don't allow no licker, an' so gits drunk on physic cordial. My father cum from a Dutch stock, and his name war Vondoodleskin. My mother, she were a "down-east" gal, an' her name afore marriage war Sophia Selina Slammer. So now you begin to see, shipmates, how I came by my name."

"No, I'm blest if I do," put in the boatswain; "your name oughter be Vondoodleskin, by rights."

"Jist hold on a bit, and you'll diskiver. My father he had bad luck, and got lynched for filibusterin', only they called it piracy. Well, to save unpleasant remarks, and at the same time be per-lite to his memory, I took mother's name, and tacked a part o' father's on in front. Well, I cruised about the world pretty considerable. Some time in the month o' August, 1860, I think it

wur, I found myself in London wi'out a tarnation cent. Now, I'd bin riggin' about pretty considerable, I can tell you, and hed a sick'ner o' the sea for a bit. One day I read in the papers as there was a Garibaldi legion fittin' out. Down I goes to Salisbury Street, where the committee was, and wants to know about it. Sez a cove in a red shirt and sword, slappin' me on the back, 'Goin', my boy, to fight for the freedom of classic Italy and glory?' Sez I, 'Darn the glory. Is there any chance o' loot?' 'Heaps on it,' he sez. 'Then I'm on; so jist put my name down for a waggin-load.' The upshot was, a few days later I went aboard the *Melazzo* steamer, wi' some four hundred rascallions, and we sails for classic Italy and *loot*, which I had my eye on the latter. Yes sir-r-ree. Well, we puts into Gibraltar for coal. There was an awful row about lettin' us ashore, but some o' us had seen a thing or two, an' we kinder took persession o' the steamer and went ashore. We did have a blazin' spree the two days we wos there. But to proceed, and make a short yarn o' it. The arternoon o' the second day we leaves the town, and comes over by the slip o' land into the Spanish lines. We had a tidy time o' it in a village about two miles out, and didn't get back to Gibraltar till arter dark. Now, in this hyar fortress the gates o' the town is closed at sunset, and no mortal thing as walks goes out or comes in till sunrise gun.

"Wall, we warn't partickler happy, you may lay your life, but we did as best we could. We got on to a part o' the ramparts, thinkin' to make our way into the town, but the sentry he didn't see it nohow. Wall, we huddles up on the cold stones o' the fortification. There were four o' us; three gets into an embrasure, and huddles up under a tarnation great gun—the biggest I see by chalks. The dotrotted selfish varmin had found a tarpaulin just big enough for three, and this chicken were left out in the cold. However, at last I hits on a plan for a good warm night o' it. In the mornin' when they was woke by the sunrise gun, they looks for me; but I ain't to be found. Thinks they, the artful coon's bin and squared the sentry and got into the town. They was wrong, though, they was. Two hours arter sunrise the *Melazzo* sets sail, and this varmin ain't aboard. They searched high an' low in the town, and couldn't find me. Wall, an hour later the *Melazzo* is hailed by a man swimmin' in the sea, two miles out; an' on lowerin' a boat, Hiram Abiram Vonslammer air hauled aboard. In course, they wanted to know how on airth I cum two mile out

to sea, an' what I slid for. Sez I, 'Cos I couldn't help it.' 'How's that?' sez one o' them; 'whar the blazes did yer get to?' 'Wall, I'll tell yer, shipmates, how it happened. You three all made yourselves tarnation comfortable, an' I didn't see why this coon shouldn't do the best for hisself; which he does, and crawls into a big cannon, stops the muzzle up wi' his jacket, and goes to sleep, quite warm and comfortable. Dotrotted if I ever thought o' it! I slept as sound as a dormouse in a hole. It were the mornin' gun, all ready loaded and primed; and may I be rammed, jammed, slammed, an' banged, if they didn't fire me off three miles to sea at sunrise! It skeered me a bit, I can tell yer, when I found myself a hurlin' through the air like a revolvin' comet, all legs and wings, and wi' my hair on fire. Dotrot their picters! they mout ha' woke a feller."

A great shout of laughter from all hands greeted the climax of Mr. Vonslammer's yarn. His party felt confident the "Pelican" could not win, while that long personage, quietly taking a drink, removed his pipe from his mouth, and asked with great seriousness—

"Say, mister—that war a big thing in cannons, I'm thinkin'. War it an eighty-pounder, or a sixty-four—or what?"

But Hiram was not to be caught tripping.

"Dunno, mister—never wur much o' a cannoneer, myself."

"Reckon it must ha' carried a big ball, that gun," pursued his antagonist. "How much did the shot for it weigh, now?"

"Well, mister, I can't desactly say, but it were a rale lump that hollow piece o' gun-metal used to spit out when her dander wur up. I should say it 'ud weigh somethin' under two ton, that cannon-ball!"

"Wur she a long gun?"

"An all-fired long gun—longer than yer own long carkiss."

"Longer nor my carkiss air now, or than it used to be?" asked Josephus Jehoram Jamsnorter, with a twinkle in his eye.

Hiram Abiram saw that twinkle, and was too wary to be caught.

"How d'ye mean?" asked the second mate, who saw also there was some hidden meaning to the words of Jchoram; "you mean, I suppose, longer than when you were a boy?"

"No, I don't, mister. I mean longer than this chile used to was five year ago."

"What do you mean, your growin' during the last five years? Why, you must be getting on for forty."

"I didn't say I growed; what I did say wur, five year ago, come next month, I wur a foot shorter nor I am now, and didn't weigh above nine stone. I see yer seem licked. Wall, jest listen, and I'll tell yer how I come to be changed arter livin' five-an'-thirty year."

JOSEPHUS JEHORAM JAMSNORTER'S TOUGH YARN.

Five year an' a month ago, I sailed from Boston for Apalashicola, which yer know is a cotton port, down South. Wall, there wur an old shipmate o' mine on board unbeknown to me, when I signed articles. Now, me an' him had a muss years afore, and we both got the worst o' it, so that nayther was satisfied. So we swur a terrific big-un, us two did, that when we met again, one or the other should cave in for good. He wur a big hulkin' fellow, six foot four, an' I wur a bit o' a whipper-snapper like "Shrimp" there, only not so cussed ugly; but I wur darnation quick, active as a catamount, and a darned sight more spiteful. Wall, we makes up our mind, we two does, as we won't fight till we can have it out fair and square, an' no fear o' any interruption. We waits till we gets to Apalashicola, and there we has the chance.

"Sez the skipper to me an' him, 'Take the dingy for two, and a pick and shovel, run down the bay, and get a boatload o' oysters.' You know in Apalash Bay, along the shore, there's oysters as big as dinner-plates, in millions; you might get enough to sink a big ship in twenty minutes, if yer wur quick at work and didn't tire. Wall, we takes the dingy and goes. Sez I to the big feller, 'Jehoram' (his name wur Jehoram, which at that time mine warn't)——"

Some one interrupted here.

"Now, just wait—you'll see it all plain when I come to the end. 'Jehoram,' sez I, 'we'll have it out to-day.'

"'Yer little wretch—yer young sprat,' he sez, 'I'll eat yer!'"

"That riz my dander. 'What'll we fight with?' I sez.

"'Darned if I know,' he says; 'we aren't got our firearms—leastwise, there's on'y one oyster-knife 'tween us.'

"'Let's go turn and turn about,' I sez; 'I'm the littlest, an' I'll hev the fust ten minits.' But he kinder didn't see it, that coon didn't. Then sez I, 'Let's fight wi' the pick an' shovel.'

"'Right you air,' sez he; 'I'll hev the pick.'

"He was artful, and thought that the pick bein' heavier and he bein' bigger, he had me licked. 'Right you air,' sez I; 'I'm on,'

"Wall, we went ashore on a sandy piece of beach. I tuk the shovel, he tuk the pick, an' at it we went like tiger-cats. We fout—we did, by *Jerusalem!*—we fout all that day an' half the night, then we rested till mornin', an' at it we went agin. We fout till noon, an' cut each other fearful. Presently he hollers, 'Spell, oh!'

"'What's up?' I sez; 'hed enuff?'

"'Not by a jugful. Let's hev a drink, an' wash the blood off.'

"'Right yer air,' I sez; 'but what are we to drink?'

"'Oyster-licker, an' eat the snails; they're rare strengthenin' is oysters.'

"'You'd better eat 'em, then,' I sez; 'for you'll want all your muscle afore I've done wi' you.'

"'We has a rare feed, an' then at it we goes like blood an' thunder. Je-ru-salem!—how the sparks did fly! We fout all day, an' towards evenin', jest as he were a-tired out, I feels my affliction comin' on——" Jehoram paused, and looked very solemn.

"Your affliction?" asked the second mate.

"Aye; I'm liable to fits—dead faint trance fits; I ain't dead, but I looks like it. Ah! they're terrible things, them fits. My body lies dead, and my sperrit goes right bang up above the clouds, all among the stars! Last time, I went to the '*nibulæ*,' as they calls that white hazy stuff. But it's a'most too far"—here he sententiously shook his head, looking all the while as solemn as an owl—"it's a'most too far, is them *nibulæ*s, it's so tryin to come back. I don't mind the planets, but them fixed stars and *nibulæ*s licks me holler. Well, you must know, that when I'm in these 'ere trances an' up aloft, I know I ain't dead, an' ken see my darned body lyin' stiff and still. There's allus a big struggle to git back; an' if the distance is anything too tall, it's painful and tryin' some, I tell yer. Wall, to go on with our fight: I felt the darned fit a-comin' on me, and fout like a thousand bulgines wi' two thousand tons o' steam to the square inch. I dashed him about fearful; the whole atmosphere around us were full o' blood, hair, bits o' flesh, an' splinters o' the pick an' shovel; but I couldn't keep the tarnation fit back, I felt it comin', an' puts on a fresh spurt. I'd just knocked out three teeth, split his skull right open--them's the teeth," he put in, pointing to a place where three teeth were gone, "and hyar's where I split his head"—and he placed his finger on a great scar across the forehead. "I'd got the skunk clean licked, when the fit seized me; I staggers for'ard, and the mean cuss takes advantage, an' just as my sperrit goes up in a trance, I sees him drive the

pickaxe right clean through my body—then he comes in—then falls down dead licked, an' kieks the bueket. So we'd put it out; I'd fout him blind and silly, an' clean killed him, an' he'd fout me into one o' my fits, and druv his pick clean through me—which wur unfair, an' mout ha' interfered with my livin' anyhow, when the tranee wur over."

The second mate muttered, "I should rather think it would. What happened next?"

"Jist hold on, and I'll tell yer. Wall, I didn't mean bein' killed slap-bang outright in a bit o' a scrimmage like that; so I struv desperate hard to get back to airth, an' what made me more anxious, I saw some big bush rats a-gnawin' at me as I lay. Wall, at last, after a terrific struggle, I comes swoopin' down. There lay the two bodies—mine which warn't dead, and t'other skunk as was. Wall, I makes a final terrific rampageous effort, an' I feels I'm in a human body agin. Up I gits, washes my wounds, an' without waitin' to look at the cove I'd killed, makes tracks away from that tragic spot. I gets to the town of Apalashicola, an' buys some doctor's stuff an' some plaster in all sorts o' picces, to do myself up. Wall, then I goes to the hotel and orders a room. In reply to questions, I informs the bos that I'd had a muss wi' another feller, and had bad luck; sure enough, I looked like it. Wall, now comes the audacious part of the business, and how my hair did stand on end when I looked in the glass! I felt big and awkward-like for some time, and my clothes seemed strange to me; but I thought that mout ha' bin caused by the exeitement o' the scrimmage. But when I looked in that mirror, I sercamed outright. The orful truth burst upon my astonished senses, and the tremendous reality knocked me clean silly. I fell to the ground, then I got up again, and had another look. What did them long legs, them arms, that six foot four of flesh, lard, and blood, mean? Why, jist this: in the hurry and confusion o' the moment, and partly owin' to the tarnation rats, I got flurried; and may I be dotrotted, rammed, jammed, slammed, and banged, if I didn't——"

"What?" several asked, breathlessly.

"*Get into the wrong body!* My own wur left lyin' by the sea-beach for the rats to eat; and for five years I've bin a-walkin' this hyar cursed ugly earkiss about, knowin' it warn't mine by rights! Now, ef that ain't enuff to rile a feller, and make him all morose, like a grizzly bar wi' chilblains, I dunno what are."

A tremendous shout rang forth at the conclusion of this tough

yarn. Presently Hiram Abiram rose and said, "Shipmates, that there's a stiffish yarn Pelican's bin a-spinnin', and I congratulates him on it; what's more, it's true, an' I can prove it."

Josephus Jehoram Jamsnorter was taken off his guard by the crafty Abiram; he fell blindly into the trap laid for him.

"Yer dotrotted little skunk!—yer unfledged shrimp, yer! what d'ye know o' my yarn?"

"Why, yer thiek-headed old alligator!" shouted Hiram Abiram, in triumph, "*I wur the t'other coon!* I had a trance, too, just at the same time—on'y you got back fust; an' when I come back from the Milky Way, you'd gone into my body, so I took yours, an' have bin a-walkin' the cussed little carkiss about for five year, knowin' it warn't mine! Now, ef that aint enuff to rile a feller, and make him kinder like a grizzly bar wi' chilblains, I dunno what is."

"It's false, you measly little skunk! Tell yer, when I fout the cove on the sands, he druv his pick through my body, an' that's how I s'pose I come to make the mistake."

Hiram Abiram bared his breast, and showed the scar of a wound.

"Here's the scar whar the pick went in," he said, in triumph; "it wur painful for a while, but the cussed little carkiss had a good constitution, and pulled through."

"Why, yer thunderin' little anatomy! you ain't a bit like what I wur," roared Jehoram. "I was a good-lookin' young feller afore I changed, an' had whiskers."

"I know yer had; but they wur blowed clean off with the gun-powder at Gibraltar; an' the unfortunate explosion o' devil's dust spiled the features o' the face, and rendered 'em quite unrecognisable by their original owner."

"Ho! ho! ho!"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Bravo, Abiram!"

"Bravo, Jehoram!"

"Bravo, both! Ha! ha! ha!"

The voice of the mate is heard bawling. "Eight bells there, Jelow! Release the wheel and look-out."

It is the wheel and look-out of Hiram and Jehoram respectively.

"Aye, aye, sir!" they both answer together promptly, as they hurry up the ladder on deck.

The second mate called after them—"Mr. Hiram Abiram Von-

slammer and Mr. Josephus Jehoram Jamsnorter, you shall both have your allowance of grog doubled."

"Aye, aye, sir!" they responded, gleefully.

"And you're the two biggest liars that ever trod a plank!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

And it is the opinion of the chronicler of these "Tough Yarns" that the second mate was right, and that if ever there should be a competitive examination for the honourable post of chief liar in the world, the proud distinction would be won by either Hiram Abiram Vonslammer or Josephus Jehoram Jamsnorter.

THE DEATH OF THE DUCHESS.

CHAPTER I.

ONE morning early in the beginning of the fourteenth century, two men were seated in the well stored library of the ducal palace of Malfi.

It was a fine old oaken chamber ; the walls were covered with richly carved book-cases, filled with rare manuscripts and books. Suits of richly chased armour stood in the corners, looking like ghostly knights guarding the literary treasures of the chamber.

The two occupants of the room were seated at a table on which were several flagons of wine and some beautifully cut glasses.

Both the men seemed sunk in deep thought, for they sat resting their foreheads on their hands, leaving their wine untasted. Between these men there was a wondrous likeness, which even overcame the striking difference in their garments. Both were tall, well made men, both had dark hair and eyes, and both seemed of the same age. At the first glance any one would have known they were brothers ; and on a closer inspection would have guessed they were twins, as indeed they were.

The one nearest the window was dressed in the most gorgeous style of the then existing fashion. A close doublet encased his fine form, showing it off to the full extent. This was made of the finest plum-coloured velvet which had been woven at the celebrated looms of Genoa. A short half-cloak made of the same costly material hung from his shoulders, reaching down to the hip, falling in such a manner that it could easily be twined round the left arm so as to form a sort of shield or buckler

in case of an attack by sword or dagger. Long yellow leather boots with castellated tops, reached nearly up to the thighs, and were met by a short pair of velvet trowsers.

The whole of this magnificent dress was richly ornamented with silk slashes and gold, besides other lace.

A splendidly jewelled poniard hung from a golden belt which also supported a heavy sword, the hilt of which sparkled with gems of immense value.

Such was Ferdinande, Duke of Calabria.

Contarino, his brother, was almost as expensively, although less showily dressed. A long robe of the finest red cloth, made almost like a woman's gown, having a long train, hung round him, and at once proclaimed him a son of the Church. He was indeed one of the Prince Cardinals, many of whom have been so famous and infamous in Italy.

Over this red robe there hung a roll of lace, so fine in its texture, so elegant in execution, and so dainty in design, that it must have cost a fortune. Such was the dress of the Cardinal, a servant of the Church, a sworn enemy to vanity, and a vowed practiser of humility.

At length the Duke looked up, and casting a rapid glance at his brother, said,—

“Good brother, I see not the drift of what you aim at. Why should I be called from the festivities, which—by the noise I hear in the court-yard—are even now preparing, to listen to the doeful tale of the lowness of my treasury, the heaviness of my debts, and your own embarrassment? What is there to be done? We have but this consolation; no one dare insult a duke or a prince of the Church.”

“True; but that to me seems but of little comfort. We may force men to respect us in their ways, but can we make them do so in their hearts. We may punish the would-be assassins, but can we bind up the slanderous tongues of the common herd? These brutes have a coarse wit that makes one smart. Though like the ant, they are small, yet like it, they sting. Something must be done. Aye! and that without loss of time.”

“By Bacchus!” exclaimed the Duke, springing to his feet, and pacing up and down the apartment. “By Bacchus! you would make a saint wild. You churchmen, who think of nothing but plots and counterplots, seem to take a strange delight in teasing us soldiers. ‘Something must be done,’ say you? Aye; so say I the same; but what is to be done?”

Cans't tell me that? If by a charge in the field of battle, I could clear myself of all these troubles, I would rush gladly on, though death stood in the way!"

"A dread enemy, that same death; but one that ends all this world's troubles, without a doubt; yet, would I for one, not have recourse to him? We churchmen, as you say, have strange ways of making plots and counterplots. Believe me, brother, that the head is by far stronger than the arm; not but what the arm is a useful instrument, when well guarded by the head, but when used recklessly, as often bringing destruction on its master, as on his adversary. Putting aside these low born slaves, who bring us in their debt, we have other creditors, who have both power and interest. These have but as yet thrown out some hints; but these same hints may rise to whispers; whispers grow to cries that will be heard at Rome, and thence may arise so fierce a storm as may shake your Ducal throne."

"Enough of this; if you have ought to advise, speak: if not, be silent, nor try to shake the courage I would have to meet my doom."

"You are impatient, brother, or 'ere this you would have known my plan. That you did not divine it seems to me most strange. But sit you down and listen."

With a gesture of impatience, the Duke threw himself into a chair, and prepared to listen to his brother's proposition.

"Some five years ago, our twin sister, married the Duke of Malfi, a noble gentleman, but stricken in years; in truth, so near his second childhood, that he chose out our pretty little chit to be his playfellow. The Duke was rich, and spite our sister's tears, we wisely did force on the marriage. Two years ago, the Duke died from old age, and, being the last of all his race, left his prodigious wealth and immense estates unto his young and blooming widow."

"Why tell me all this? I know these things as well as you."

"Patience, good brother! patience. I needs must tell you all, or else the thread of my meaning will remain unperceived, and there are some things that had better be *understood* than spoken aloud."

The Duke of Calabria shrugged his shoulders, and motioned his brother to proceed, which he did, in the same calm manner.

"After the mourning for the late Duke of Malfi was over, our sister still continued to remain in strict privacy, entrusting

all her public business to her noble steward, Antonio di Bologna."

"Well?" cried the Duke, impatiently, "all *that* I know."

"About a month ago, the Duchess throws off her widow's weeds, and once more determines to mingle with the world."

"A wise and worthy resolution, in so good and fair a lady," cried the Duke; "we courtiers are not like you priests, and love not to see fair faces pine in solitude."

"A wise and worthy resolution,' say you," sneered the Cardinal; "I think it otherwise, so please your sage-ship. The Duchess, as you say, is young and beautiful; she has, as yet, never known what love is; think you so fair a creature, rich and youthful, breathing the amorous atmosphere of the Court, will long remain in ignorance of that all-absorbing passion? Why grant me patience, brother; have not our sterner, harder natures, given way before god Cupid!"

"Well, well; what then? I see no harm in all this. Should she but marry one of equal rank—"

"Tut, brother; I fear the rich fumes of the Lachrimæ Christi have mounted to your brain, and driven you foolish," said the Cardinal, scornfully; then striking the table with his fist, he leant over to his brother, and hissed between his teeth, "If she marry again, she may—nay, she is certain to have children, and then her large estates and wealth pass from our family. Do you comprehend that?"

For a moment the Duke was silent, and then said in a low voice,—

"I see your drift, Contarino. She must not wed."

"True! but how prevent her? We are, of a surety, her guardians, and, according to the law, she cannot marry without our consent. But then, to withhold that consent, would cause us deep disgrace, and she might apply unto the head of all, the Pope, and then our game is lost?"

"What can we do to hinder all this? You are like one who promises all good, and straight-way shows us nought but ill."

"She must be watched. Since I have rested here, I have confessed many of the servants—such being my pleasure. Most love our sister well—and so they should, for she's most bounteous—but others like her well enough, yet not so well as gold; so I have worked upon these people, that they may serve me. No look, no smile, can our fair sister give, but I have note of it."

"By the keys of Saint Peter!" cried the Duke, with a grim smile. "If Holy Mother Church saves her children, her servants as often as not destroy them. ! This plan must be carried out."

"We will try to persuade her to retire into private life; but should she show a will against us, we must wed her to some creature of our own, so that, come what may, her wealth shall still be ours."

"But should she refuse? Her will is strong, and she is powerful."

"Why, still her property must be ours."

"I understand you not."

"The Count di Romelio stood in my path; he was removed," said the Cardinal, with a peculiar, meaning glance.

"He whom Bosola slew?" cried the Duke, in horror.

"The same," replied the Cardinal, quietly.

"You would not—"

"Hush!" cried the Cardinal, placing his hand quickly over his brother's mouth. "I told you there were some things better *understood* than spoken."

"But this deed would damn us for ever!"

"Bah! Do you think one or more makes the difference? Trust me, brother, if there be punishment hereafter, as some believe, you and I shall have our share. That being so, let us make this world as pleasant as we can."

"And should this deed be necessary?" said the Duke, in a low voice, "who would do it?"

"Bosola," replied the Cardinal. "Deeds like these are best done with the least instruments."

"How will you get him here?"

"He either is, or will be here, to-day. I sent for him. By the way, the Duchess has lost her master of the horse; Bosola would suit that post well. Recommend him!"

"What! the assassin?"

"Yes," replied the Cardinal, "the assassin, and *our* friend!"

"As you will," replied the Duke; "somehow, Contarino, though I am the eldest brother, you have always ruled me."

"Your eldership dates but of some few minutes," said the Cardinal.

"Aye! but my love for years. Never yet have we quarrelled, or passed one thought away from each other. 'Tis true, sometimes I've thought you rather hard, and asked—"

"Enough of this," cried the Cardinal, sharply. "Our sister, younger than us, by some two years, has caused us much trouble ; 'tis right that she should pay for it. Hark ! I hear the horn sounding ; the jousts are now commencing. Haste thee, brother, or the Duchess will miss us. I will follow presently."

Taking his plumed hat from the table, the Duke threw it lightly on his head, and left the chamber.

"Fool !" said the Cardinal, as he watched his brother's retreating figure ; fool, to talk to me of love. The Church has closed my heart to all love but one, and that is self. The day may come when *you* will stand in my way, as the Duchess does now, and trust me, Bosola shall do his work, as well for you, as most likely he will for our sister !"

Summoning his attendants, the Cardinal, with a grave and reverend pace, prepared to join the revelry.

CHAPTER II.

It was a gay sight to see the jousting in the Palace Gardens. The barriers were erected on a beautiful green lawn, and were covered with the armorial bearings of the gentlemen who took part in the sports.

Round the barriers were arranged tents wherein ladies and gentlemen were seated to watch the sport. The middle tent was occupied by the Duchess and her two brothers and their followers, forming a most brilliant group.

The Duchess was a most beautiful lady of about two and twenty. Her hair, which was of a beautiful auburn, hung upon her shoulders that were as smooth and white as the famous marble of Carrara. Her eyes were large, soft, and expressive, their general expression being one of gentle love, but there was a secret fire in them that told she could be haughty, though not so cruel as her brother.

Her rich apparel glittered and sparkled in the morning sun till she looked like some heavenly creature clothed in jewels from Paradise.

Knight after Knight met in the jousts. Lances were broken and casques cracked ; still one Knight remained victorious over them all, seeming to meet the terrible rush of his adversaries as the rocks meet the dash of the sea.

"By Hercules !" cried the Duke, "yon Knight seems to be

matchless. Who knows his name? By his plain black pointed shield he seems to have no bearings."

"Save that of manly courage," said the Cardinal.

A flush passed over the Duchess' face as she smiled upon her priestly brother, but she never spoke a word.

"Do you not know his name, fair sister," asked the Cardinal, with a meaning look at his brother.

"I, my Lord Cardinal!" exclaimed the lady, somewhat confusedly, "nay, how should I know. Probably he is but some poor unknown Knight, who would, by his prowess, gain my noble brother of Calabria's good favour."

The Duke and the Cardinal exchanged glances in a darkly ominous manner, but neither of them spoke.

A flourish of trumpets told that the tournament was over, and the heralds proclaimed that the unknown Knight had won the victory over all, and bade him approach to receive the wreath of honour from the Duchess.

Slowly the knight stepped forth, undoing his helmet at the same time, and as he dropped on his knee before the Duchess, he moved his casque, displaying the face of Antonio di Bologna.

"Corpo de Baccio!" cried the Duke, "why it is your Grace's noble steward. By my faith, if he be half so ready with his pen as with his lance, he must be a good servant indeed!"

The Duchess grew crimson as she heard her brother's praises of Antonio, and her hands trembled so that she could scarcely place the wreath of victory on the young knight's brow.

"Let me add this small mark of my esteem to that of my noble sister," said the Duke, drawing a handsome ring from his finger, and handing it to the young Knight. By the mass! you are so skillful I should like to try a passage of arms with you myself."

"I am no soldier, good sir," said the Cardinal, with a bitter smile, "but if all that I hear of your wit be true, I would hold a passage of words with you. For I am one who believe that the old can learn from the young, as well as the young from the old."

"Come, madam, said the Duke, taking her hand, "In an hour my brother and myself must be on our way to Rome, fain therefore we would taste your hospitality before we leave.

"Pardon me," said the Cardinal gravely, "I have some important business to attend to here before I depart. If

therefore, you will excuse me, I'll take some refreshment in the library alone, and join you afterwards."

The chief party proceeded to the banqueting hall, whilst the Cardinal, followed by one or two of his retainers, went to the library.

When he had arrived there, he dismissed his followers, and seating himself at the table, filled a glass of wine, which he drank off rapidly.

"It cannot be true," he muttered, "she would not stoop so low. So low! and why not? Women choose all sorts of strange fancies that would turn a man. Yet he is a gallant fellow: nevertheless he must not cross my path."

At that moment the door opened, and a tall, powerful, soldierlike man entered the room. He was a handsome fellow, but with a sinister cast about his face that made men shudder, and most women tremble.

He advanced quickly to the table, with a defiant, bold air, and pouring out a glass of wine, drank it off carelessly.

"So you have arrived at last?" said the Cardinal.

"I have," replied the man, carelessly, "and do not intend parting from you quickly. I have done you better service than to be turned off so slightly. This is the most miserable age, where only the reward of doing well, is the doing it—"

"You enforce your merit too much," said the Cardinal, sternly.

"Perhaps I do—at least so thought Count Romelio," replied the man. "I had two years at the galleys, for doing your orders, and now I am discarded."

"I would you could become honest," said the Cardinal, bitterly.

"Faith! then would all business between thee and me be over," rejoined the other. "All your divinity will never set me the way to it, and I fear your counsel tends the other way!"

"Enough of this, Bosola!" cried the Cardinal; "I do in some way confess that you have done me some service. That service I would now requite—there's gold for you."

As the Cardinal spoke, he threw a heavy purse on the table, which Bosola dexterously snatched up, and throwing it in the air caught it again.

"Welcome, sweet mistress mine," he cried, "'tis long since we have met. More will follow. It never rains but it pours, and such a goodly shower as this, has generally a thunderbolt at its tail. Well, my lord, whose throat am I to cut?"

"Your love of bloodshed gives you that horrid hint. I want none of it. That is but to keep you at this court to watch my sister, the Duchess ; she is a young widow, and I would not have her wed again. Therefore, I would have you mark well what suitors come and go ; how also she affects them."

"And why should she not marry again?"

"Ask no reasons ; it is enough that I would not have her do so."

"Enough for you, perchance ; but not enough for her. I do not like the office. Besides, how am I to come so close upon her, as to note her actions ? Think you that she will take me by her side as a pet ? By my troth ! and were such the case, I would not only disobey your orders, but would find her ladyship a husband at the same time."

"Silence, fool !" said the Cardinal. "You ought to know the value of silence by this time."

"Perhaps so ; it cost me two years at the galleys, for teaching the Count Romelio that same silence, and I taught him so well that he could never tell how a certain Cardinal had bribed—"

"Hush !" cried the Cardinal, sharply. "I have no time to waste in this talk. Within an hour, probably much sooner, I shall depart for Rome with my brother, the Duke of Calabria, who is busy getting you appointed master of the horse to our fair sister, the Duchess of Malfi !"

"What ! say you so ; master of the horse. I'm your's—why know I can prank me as I like ; become a courtier, and practise the art of telling lies ; that being the only vice wherein as yet I've failed. If the devil would buy souls, let him court a priest or a woman, for his broker. They do the thing so neatly."

"Enough—I hear the preparations for the departure ; be true to me, and fear not but that you will be well rewarded."

"Stay !" cried Bosola, "one word before you go. Does your brother, Duke Ferdinande, know of this conspiracy?"

"He does ; 'twas by his orders that it was set afloat."

"Then if I see him, I may tell him all, as if he were yourself."

"Certainly, and also receive instructions from him, as though they were from me. Now follow me—I must present you to the Duchess."

The Cardinal summoned his attendants, and proceeded to the hall, where he found his brother, already taking leave of his sister.

"Farewell, my fair sister," cried the Duke gaily; "now that we are about to depart, I would say a few words of advice to you. I would not have you dull; far from it; but I would not have you too gay; for men have idle tongues, and oft put down a lightness of heart as lightness of character. Remember, you have a great name to support. Keep it unsullied."

"Remember," added the Cardinal, solemnly, "that you are now a widow; temptations surround you on all sides. Would you be guided by me, I think 'twould be well to fly these sore temptations, and seek for rest in the bosom of our Holy Mother Church."

"Nay, my good brother," replied the Duchess gaily, "I do not feel inclined to surrender up my liberty so soon. You do forget that I for years was a close prisoner, kept close shut up by the late Duke, my husband. I will never marry again."

"So most widows say; but commonly that notion lasts not long," said the Cardinal; "remember the Duke and myself are your guardians, and warn you that you must not wed without our sanction."

"If," continued the Duke, "you should choose to wed in private, as some most wretched women have done 'ere this; trust me, we'll find you out, and take a sharp farewell."

"Nay, brothers, be not so sharp with me," pleaded the Duchess; "I have no thought of such a thing. Come, before you go, demand some favour, that in granting it, I may prove my love to you."

"Here is a poor, but honest soldier, madam," replied the Duke, pointing to Bosola; "I would that you should take him into your household—and place him well, for he has served me."

"With pleasure," said the Duchess; "as yet I cannot tell what office to give him; but the first that does fall vacant shall be his."

"The mastership of your horse is vacant, gentle sister," said the Cardinal.

"Then it is his," replied the Duchess; "with two such, signor, you must always succeed. What is your name?"

"Bosola, so please your grace," answered the man, roughly.

"He has a rough way," said the Cardinal, "but he is honest; you may trust the inmost secrets of your heart to him. And so farewell, sweet sister, we will soon meet again."

They took an affectionate leave of their sister, and a few minutes after, the cavalcade was moving rapidly across the rough road to Rome.

CHAPTER III.

NO SOONER had the two brothers departed, than the Duchess retired to her room, and meditated on what they had said to her.

Perhaps, had the Duke and Cardinal been anxious that their sister should have married, instead of desiring her not to do so, they could not have discovered a better way of making her fulfil their wishes, than by giving her their imperious commands against her wedding.

Haughty, and impatient of control, the Duchess could not bear to think, that even by thought, her brothers should attempt to assume the command over her; and, naturally, spent day after day, meditating over their words, and wondering what they meant.

During these long meditations she would often command that her Steward, Antonio di Bologna, should either read or sing to her, so that she might not be suspected by Bosola, whom she felt convinced her brothers had placed near her to act as a spy.

One fine, sultry afternoon, Antonio was leaning on the terrace that surrounded the palace, gazing at the beautiful view that lay before him, when Bosola, in his usual rough manner, stepped up to the steward, and commenced a conversation.

"A penny for your thoughts, Master Steward," he commenced; "if I mistake not, by the lacadasical look of your eyes, you were thinking of some fair lady. Now tell me, am I not correct?"

"Perhaps! Are you a reader of men's thoughts?" asked Antonio.

"I—faith not I," cried the other; "I like not such hollow things. To me it seems that our fair Duchess has of late grown wondrous pensive. Our office—at least mine—is quite a sinecure. You certainly have some work to do. Do you know what has caused this change?"

"Not I," replied Antonio, earnestly; and if I did, I should not tell it you. Hark ye, Bosola, it is neither your nor my office to ferret out our lady's secrets. Troubles are plentiful enough to all, without our seeking for those which belong to others."

At this moment Cariola, the Duchess's lady-in-waiting, leant over the upper terrace, and called to Antonio.

"What is your bidding, fair lady?" said Antonio, glancing upward, with a smile.

"The Duchess wishes for you in the gallery; you must attend upon her instantly," replied the girl.

"I come upon the instant," said Antonio; and without staying to exchange another word with Bosola, he turned and entered the palace.

"This is ever the way," growled Bosola; "fool that I was to trust myself against a woman; they are more cunning than the fox, and as vindictive as the wolf. The best way to catch them is in a snare. And, if I do not catch my lady Duchess before long, then am I no man."

Meanwhile the Duchess was waiting impatiently for the coming of Antonio. She had pondered over her brothers' words constantly, and, somehow, the graceful steward, who had behaved so gallantly in the tournament was always in her thoughts. Pity, they say, is near akin to love: and, certainly, thinking produces that passion.

The Duchess at first only thought with pride of the steward as her servant, but fancy soon tricked him out in the garb of a lover, and the Duchess being a true woman, the more obstacles that presented themselves, the more determined she became in carrying out her purpose.

It is true that as she reflected upon the dire vengeance her two brothers had sworn against her, her heart beat faster, and her limbs trembled, but it was not with fear, but with passion, to think that they should dare to try to control her passions, or dictate to her upon a subject that so nearly affected her happiness.

Her first marriage had been forced on against her inclination, to gratify her brothers' ambition. She had hated the Duke, her husband, and had, on many occasions to thank Antonio for those thousand small services, that separately, are of no consequence, but together, make a life's happiness.

Until her brothers spoke to her, she had not dreamed of marriage, but they had put the idea in her head—they had blown upon the fire that smouldered in her bosom, and it had burst forth in all its strength, unquenchable, unconquerable.

"What!" she exclaimed, passionately, "shall my brothers' threats move me, or make me forego my love? Never! If all my royal kindred lay in my way to this marriage, I'd make them stepping stones to accomplish my purpose. Antonio loves me! I must have been blind not to have seen it before, and I love him! Oh! fool that I have been, not to have known it!

He dare not speak his love—his rank is so inferior to mine, but I dare tell him that he is loved, and raise him to my rank, or sink to his !”

She had scarcely finished speaking, when Antonio entered the room, and bowing low, demanded what was her pleasure.

“I am weary of this seclusion,” she began, “read to me, Antonio.”

“What tale, madam, or poem would you like.”

“One that tells of love ; a love story passionate and firm. One that is not hopeless, although it seem so. Such, for instance, as a low-born girl loving a great duke.”

“Such love, I fear, is hopeless, madam,” sighed Antonio.

“And why ?” demanded the Duchess, in winning tones.

“How could a poor girl ever reach so high ? She might love, but such love being read arightly, means but shame.”

“Nay ! but love, like death, makes all equal,” said the Duchess.

“Yes ! but when a poor girl loves a Duke, she can only reach high enough to gain his love by stooping so low as to gain all honest men’s hate. What book shall I read you ?”

“But if a poor man, a scholar and a gentleman, were to love a lady of rank and wealth—a Duchess like myself, for instance—how then ? He certainly might look as high.”

“Yes, he may look as high ; as poets gaze at the moon, worshipping its splendour, drawing inspiration from its light until he goes insane, and even in this madness it will rule him. For all that he cannot, may not touch it.”

“But courage overcomes all things,” said the Duchess. “It is cowardice alone that makes a man despair.”

“Such courage in the world’s eyes would be taken for madness, or even worse. For him who loves so much above his station there is but one hope.”

“And that ?”

“Is death !” replied Antonio, solemnly.

“I will not have you read to me now,” said the Duchess. “You have made me more sad and miserable than I was before.”

“Can I do ought to remove this sadness ?” asked Antonio.

“Yes ; take pen and ink and write whilst I dictate.”

“The steward moved to the table ; and, taking pen and ink, prepared to write.

“I am ready, madam,” said the steward, “will you proceed.”

"What did I say?" asked the Duchess, as if waking from deep meditation.

"You said that you would dictate what I should write."

"Oh! I remember. Yes, after the expenses I have lately incurred, I think it would be well to see the accounts. Do you not think so?"

"So please your beauteous excellency—"

"Beauteous!" exclaimed the Duchess, smiling; "and do you think so? I owe my beauty unto you, who have relieved me from all the cares of my state. I could not live without you."

"I will fetch my accounts instantly."

"Nay, when I say I wish to know what is laid up in store for me, I meant in heaven. I would make my will. If I had a husband I should not have this trouble. What shall I do first?"

"Procure a husband," replied the steward, in a low voice

"And then how should I make my will?"

"Why, give him all," cried Antonio, passionately.

"All?"

"Yes, your excellent self; the rarest treasure in the universe."

"And what do you think of marriage?" asked the Duchess, in a half serious, half laughing voice.

"It is difficult to describe; marriage is either heaven or hell. There is no middle state, and they who enter at its portals find either happiness or misery to welcome them."

"Why, your eye is red," said the Duchess. "It is inflamed, let me pass my ring over it. They say the touch of a wedding ring will cure such humours."

As she spoke, she drew off her wedding-ring and placed it in his hand.

"There is my wedding-ring; strange I should give it you, for I have made a vow never to part with it but to my second husband."

"But you have parted with it now!"

"Yes, to help your *eyesight*."

"Yet it made me almost blind."

"How?"

"There is a saucy and ambitious devil in this circle," continued Antonio, as he held the ring between his thumb and finger.

"Then surely it were well to remove it."

"But how? most beauteous madam."

"Surely there needs no conjuration to tell you that. I'll show you."

With a joyous laugh the Duchess slipped the ring on to Antonio's finger, who, overcome with joy, knelt at her feet.

"Can I believe my ears?" he exclaimed, in rapture. "Surely you do but jest."

"Antonio, I have long since known you love me, but found you were too modest to breathe your love. Perchance you under-rated your good qualities, many as they are; and over-rated the few that I possess."

"Oh! gentle lady," cried Antonio, "I scarce dare now believe my happiness. In dreams I do confess that I have dared to hope; but waking thoughts, like thieves, broke in and stole the golden visions."

"No one can steal your heart from me," murmured the Duchess, as she leant upon his bosom. "We must not let my brothers know of our marriage, for they are powerful, and would seek revenge. You heard how roughly they warned me not to wed?"

"What need we fear? I do not wish for title or for honours. All I crave is your dear love. Our marriage shall be secret; no one shall know of it save the priest and one witness. I wish not for the world to know my happiness; but am content to remain outwardly as your steward, as in reality I am your slave."

"Cariola, my woman, knows our secret, dear Antonio. A priest will attend in the private chapel to-night, and will marry us. Do not let any one know our secret. I fear my servants are many of them in the pay of the Cardinal. Oh! Antonio, he is a bold, bad man, who holds the Duke in his power, and forces him to persecute me. I dare not trust anyone in my household, save Cariola; but most of all I fear Bosola. He spies upon my actions, and seems to read my inmost mind; his rough speech is but a cloak for his dishonest heart. I know that he has done some terrible deed to please the Cardinal, and it is as his creature that he comes here."

"But can you not have him removed?" asked Antonio.

"No; that were to create suspicion directly. We must keep our counsel, and trust in providence. Farewell, dear one; remember, to-night at ten, in the private chapel. There we will meet, never to part again!"

"Good-bye, my queen, my love!" cried Antonio, folding her

to his breast, and kissing her passionately : " now is the dream of my life fulfilled—all sorrow has fled, and the future seems one of happiness and love ! "

Once more Antonio embraced her fondly, and then left her, in order to avoid the suspicion which would naturally arise, if he were to remain any length of time alone with the Duchess, who, as the reader knows, had good reasons to suspect her servants.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE years after the occurrences had happened that we related in our last chapter, Bosola was standing on the terrace in front of the palace, gazing anxiously down the road which led to Rome.

" It is strange," he muttered, " no message from the Cardinal, and yet the letter that I sent him was enough to have brought him here ; ay ! and the Duke also. That the Duchess has a lover, I will swear, but who that lover is, I cannot tell. Two years ago the Duchess was ill for a week or more ; and some of my fellows swear a child's cry was heard in her apartment. All this I do believe, but have no proof thereof ; I also firmly think that her ladyship is again about to be a mother. This time she shall not escape me, and to that end have I written to the Cardinal and Duke. Here comes the Duchess and Cariola, attended, of course, by Antonio. How proudly he bears himself, more like a lord than a steward. She leans upon his arm, too. Oh ! 'tis well ! from far less things than that I've gained a hint to unravel a mystery. Good evening, madam," he continued, as the Duchess approached, " I trust your ladyship feels better ? "

" Thanks, good Bosola ; yet I still am faint and weak. I have come to take a breath of air before I retire to rest."

" I fear of late," continued Bosola, " your excellency has not taken exercise enough. The horses grow fat and lazy in the stables ; the garden paths are untrodden ; whilst the rich fruit rots on the trees. See, here are some beautiful apricots that I have gathered. Would you not like to taste them ? "

Bending on his knee, he presented a small basket of apricots to the Duchess, who received them with thanks, and ate them with avidity.

"If your excellency's illness should increase," said Bosola, "would it not be well that I should send for your brothers from Rome? They might blame us all were this not done."

"Nay, my good Bosola—I am well, quite well," replied the Duchess, rising hurriedly from her seat, and walking down the path; "at least, I soon shall be."

Scarcely had she uttered the words, than she uttered a piercing shriek, and would have fallen to the ground, had not Antonio caught her in his arms.

In an instant all was confusion—the attendants pressed forward to see the Duchess, and it was with difficulty Antonio bore her to her private apartments, assisted as he was by Cariola.

No sooner had they left, than the servants gathered together in the great hall, and commenced discussing the cause and nature of the Duchess's illness.

Bosola listened contemptuously to the many suggestions that were thrown out by the different servants, but never ventured a word, for his wish was, not to disclose his own suspicions, but to learn as much as possible, what were those of others.

But in this he was disappointed; not one of the men or women seemed to have any idea of what was the matter with their lady. They spoke of every disease, from the plague down to simple cold; but never once hinted at what Bosola was convinced was the true cause.

Seeing that it was but a waste of time to stay listening to the men's chattering, Bosola was about to leave the room, when he was stopped by the sudden entrance of Antonio, who bade all the household should be summoned before him. This was no sooner done, than in an excited manner he hastened to address them as if from the Duchess.

"The Duchess has commanded me to thank you all for your kind sympathy; this strange and sudden illness is unaccountable, but soon her doctor will have ascertained the cause. Pray Heaven! it be not poison!" he continued, glancing sharply at Bosola.

A murmur of surprise ran round the room, and the servants glanced in each other's faces in astonishment.

"It has just been discovered," continued Antonio, "that the Duchess's jewel-case has been broken open, and the contents removed. She is unwilling to suspect any one; and, therefore, desires that no one shall leave the palace to-night; but that all

of you shall retire to your separate rooms. the keys thereof shall be brought to me, and in the morning a search shall be made for the missing gems. By these means the guilty will be discovered and punished, whilst the innocent will prove their innocence, and shall be rewarded. Now go, and remember that he who is found away from his apartment will in some measure have admitted that he is guilty of the theft."

Silently the servants retired to their several apartments, the doors of which were locked by Bosola, who handed the keys to Antonio, who then locked Bosola in his chamber.

"So, so, my lady!" cried Bosola, when he was alone, "here is another strange attack of illness, during which no one must approach you. It strikes me that the only jewel that is lost is your virtue. I wonder whether there will be heard another cry of a child. I'll not stop here to be kept in the dark a prisoner. No, I'll prove what is the cause of this same mystery, and should my suspicions prove true, the Cardinal shall be informed of the increase in the family.

Lighting a dark lantern, he managed to force back the bolt of his door with the blade of his dagger, and crept cautiously towards the apartments occupied by the Duchess.

He passed through several chambers, until he came to a long corridor which led from the wing of the palace, wherein slept the better class of domestics, to that which held the state apartments.

He was about to enter this passage, when he was stopped by Antonio, who was coming in the opposite direction.

"Who's there?—who are you?—speak!" cried Antonio.

"Why, what a coward you are, Antonio!" replied the other; "I am Bosola, your friend!"

"Bosola!" cried Antonio; "what brought you here?"

"I heard a scream, and methought it came from the Duchess's chamber, and, therefore, could not rest until I knew the cause."

"It was nothing—nothing," said Antonio, hastily; then added to himself, "this fellow will ruin all, unless I stop him."

"Perhaps not," replied Bosola, roughly, "but I would satisfy myself upon that subject, so let me pass."

"Stand back!" said Antonio; "it grieves me much, Bosola, to have to stay you. But you must know you are suspected of some base designs against the Duchess!"

"I! why, how so? What have I done?" demanded Bosola.

"'Tis thought the fruit you gave her excellency to-day, was *poisoned*!"

"Poisoned!" cried Bosola. "Bah! you cannot shake me thus. But I'll not argue with you, master steward. Most like you do but do your mistress's bidding, therefore I'll not blame you. Good night!"

With a sulky nod, Bosola strode away, whilst Antonio walked back to the Duchess's apartments; but no sooner had the latter disappeared than Bosola returned.

"Antonio dropped a piece of paper here," he muttered, as he carefully drew back the slide of his lantern. "Ah! I thought I was not mistaken. I'll examine it at leisure in my chamber."

Having reached his room, he placed the lantern on the table, and read these lines, which were written in a female hand upon the paper—

"The Duchess was safely delivered of a son."

"The game is mine!" he exclaimed vindictively. "I was not mistaken. This must be forwarded to the Cardinal at once. But how? No one is to leave the palace. Yes; Isambo will return from Rome to-morrow; he is in the Cardinal's pay, and he must take the paper. Oh! these great families are not free from frailties, more than the humblest ones. Nay; virtue seems to me a lowly maid; which, like the modest violet, hides herself and lives near to the ground. I must not cause Antonio more suspicion until the Duke or Cardinal arrives, or else my life will answer for my folly."

Carefully placing the paper in a hiding-place, he wrote a short note to the Cardinal, telling him of the discovery he had made. That done, he threw himself on the ground, dressed as he was, so as to take a few hours' rest, and be ready to rise at break of day to start Isambo back to Rome, if possible before the rest of the household knew of his arrival.

CHAPTER V.

FOR all his cunning Bosola was for once unable to carry out his plans, for Isambo did not arrive at the palace until nearly a month after he was expected, and then he brought word that the Duke and the Cardinal had gone to Otranto.

Notwithstanding this disappointment, Bosola at once dispatched the man to the brothers, giving him orders to return

immediately with their answer, which he did, bringing a secret message to Bosola to the effect that the Duke would arrive at the palace secretly that night. Consequently Bosola stationed himself at his post on the terrace, ready to receive his master.

It was a terribly cold and dreary night; the wind came in heavy gusts, bearing a sharp piercing rain on its wings, dashing it in fitful storms against the window-panes.

"By Bacchus," growled Bosola, "this is a night made for plotting. If the Devil ever had a will for work, a night like this would inspire him. I wish the Duke would come; the night grows late, and I feel half frozen."

He took one or two turns up and down the terrace, and listened.

The sound of footsteps fell upon his ears, and a minute after he perceived a cloaked figure approaching him.

"Who goes there?" demanded Bosola.

"The Duke; is that you, Bosola?"

"It is, my lord. What think you of the news I sent your grace?"

"It has inflamed my anger to that extent, that she I once held as a sister shall feel the weight of all my hatred. Know you who is the father of the child?"

"Not I, my lord."

"Have you no suspicions; can you not guess?"

"I dare not venture one, lest in doing so, I should bring the innocent to punishment and aid the guilty to escape."

"How, then, shall we act? I would not have one who has held complicity in this case escape my vengeance."

"But if we act in haste all may escape. It would be better to be cautious. I fear now that we are suspected."

"What, then, would you advise should be done?"

"You have an armed retinue with you, I suppose, in case of danger?"

"I have; they wait out yonder for me."

"Then I would advise you to enter the house, and, avoiding observation, reach the Duchess's chamber. There conceal yourself and watch; or, should you find her alone, compel her to name her lover."

"I fear me in my passion I shall kill her," said the Duke. Still, it must be done. Lead the way, Bosola; I will not let my purpose cool, lest that her beauty should disarm me.

Bosola led the Duke through a small postern and up a winding staircase, which terminated in a door that opened out on the

corridor leading to the Duchess's rooms. Having directed the Duke which way to turn, Bosola left him.

Creeping stealthily along, the Duke Ferdinande entered the room, and paused for a moment to admire the beautiful picture presented to him.

At a small table sat the Duchess of Malfi. Her glorious hair was unbraided and hung upon her ivory shoulders in rich heavy folds. Her head was slightly bent over a volume that she was reading by the aid of a lamp, which threw a roseate hue from its tinted globe over her beautiful figure, which was set off to the best advantage by a white silk dressing-gown in which she was dressed.

Cautiously as the Duke had entered the room, his sister had heard him; and, without taking her eyes off the book, commenced speaking, evidently mistaking the Duke for her lover.

"Oh! I am so glad you have come at last, dear one," she said. "This horrid book has made me feel so dull. It is about a cruel brother that murdered his sister, in spite of her tears and entreaties. I fear me that my brothers will one day find me out, and be almost as cruel as this one I'm reading about. But if I'm doomed to die, I will at least die as a princess, without entreaties or cries.

"Die, then!" exclaimed the Duke, quickly drawing his dagger and placing it on the table by her side.

With a scream of horror the unfortunate lady sprang up and faced her brother, who, seizing her by the wrist, glared fiercely at her.

"Die!" repeated the Duke. Die! disgraced—dishonoured thing."

"Pray, sir, hear me," cried the Duchess. "I am innocent, I swear it."

"Would you purjure yourself and add that crime to your foul dishonour. Strive not to make me blind to all your faults; I know them all. Where are your children—the proofs of your infamy?"

"In pity hear me," implored the Duchess. "I am married honourably. Haply not to your liking, but still honestly married by the Church. Will you see my husband?"

"If I had the eyes of a basilisk that I might kill him at a glance I would do so. If I meet him it will be to cause his death. It were better for him never to have been born than to have crossed my path. His life shall answer his temerity."

"Why might I not marry? Wherein have I done you wrong?"

"Wherein have you done wrong? Do you know what reputation is? I'll tell you, though to small purpose, since the instruction comes too late. I'll tell you by fable. Once upon a time, Reputation, Love, and Death were travelling over the world together; but somehow they could not agree, and therefore separated. Death told them they would find him in great battles. Love said he should be found amongst the lowly and the poor, where dowrys and money are not talked about or considered; and amongst those quiet folk that had nothing left them by their dead parents but an honest name. 'Stay,' quoth Reputation, 'do not leave me, for I am of that fine nature that they who once part from me will never find me more.' So you and reputation have parted once and for ever. So farewell; I never will see you more."

Throwing up his hands as if to curse her, the Duke hurried from the room.

The Duchess sank back, overcome with her intense grief. No path seemed open to her, no way of escape was feasible. What could she do? She knew well that her two brothers would never forgive her, and that their vengeance would be terrible.

Hastily rising, she struck upon a gong, and bade the servant who answered it, summon Antonio instantly to her presence.

"Antonio!" she exclaimed, as he entered the room, "all is lost, love; my brother, Fredinande, has been here; all is lost, he swears vengeance against us."

"Does he know we are married?" demanded Antonio.

"He knows that I am married; but not your name. Hark! there is some one knocking at the door. Hide, Antonio, behind the arras, until I find who it may be. Pray Heaven! it be not my brothers' vengeance come so soon."

As Antonio slipped behind the hangings that surrounded the room, the Duchess threw open the door and admitted Bosola.

"The Duke, your brother, madam, has taken horse, and rides post haste to Rome. As he mounted his horse, he told me you were undone."

"Indeed—indeed I am!" moaned the Duchess.

"Why, what's the matter? Is the ease so hopeless?"

"Indeed, I fear so," said the Duchess, assuming a quiet and resigned air; "Antonio, the master of our household, has dealt falsely in our accounts. My brother had some heavy debts to

pay, and I had promised him the money ; hence his arrival here so secretly. But, to my amaze, I find Antonio has dealt falsely with me, and robbed my treasury to that extent, and fear my brother is ruined."

"This is indeed strange," said Bosola, then added to himself, "how well she lies ; a woman will beat the Devil in lying to save her lover."

"Thus you see my brother's bills in Naples will be protested, causing him much shame and trouble !" cried the Duchess, assuming to be in a rage ; "but this shall not go unpunished. Call up my officers ! Antonio shall pay for this !"

"I do your excellency's orders," replied Bosola, and as he left the room, he muttered to himself : "Antonio ! always Antonio ! I fear me our steward has robbed our lady's heart more than her purse."

No sooner had Bosola disappeared, than the Duchess drew aside the arras that covered a secret door that led into Antonio's rooms.

"Antonio !" she cried, "my husband ! come quickly, or all will be lost !"

"Great Heavens !" exclaimed Antonio, "what is the meaning of this out-cry of anguish ! Surely nought can come of pain where you are !"

"Oh ! Antonio !" moaned the Duchess, as she leant upon his breast, "my brother, the Duke, has discovered our love. I know not whether he suspects you ; but you must fly at once. Fly to Ancona. I will send my treasure and jewels to you. Meanwhile, to cover our intent, I will accuse you of some wicked act, and rail against you. Thus will I shield us both. Hush ! not a word ; here come my officers !"

Quickly Antonio perceived the danger that they both were in, and as the officers, headed by Bosola, entered the room, he exclaimed, in beseeching tones,—

"I do beseech your Grace will hear me."

"Silence !" returned the Duchess, passionately ; "I have listened too much to your plausible tongue already. My estate wasted ; my brother's credit ruined ; my treasury emptied by you. Oh ! you did well to feign sickness, when the time to audit came. Gentlemen, I would have this man be an example to you all. He has deceived me. I gave him all, and trusted him with that I would have trusted no other ; and thus he has repaid me. I will not punish him ; rather preferring that his

own conscience should twist the whips to lash him ! Begone ! We banish you !”

“Strong in my conscious innocence, I bear your Grace’s humor, and humbly take my leave,” replied Antonio.

“Your fortune we confiscate, in part payment for that of which you have robbed us.”

“Were it my life, I would give it as readily for your service.”

“Go, sir !” replied the Duchess, “you have your pass from out our states ; and may heaven forgive your sins !”

“You see, gentlemen,” said Antonio, turning to the officers, as he was about leaving the room, “what it is to serve a prince with all your heart. He who trusts to a prince’s favour, is like a foolish boy, who swims on bladders ; gaily he glides across the stream, gilded by the shining sun—but should the bladdere burst—he sinks to rise no more. Better is he who trusts to his own strong arms, and simple skill !”

Turning slowly away, with bent down head, he left the room.

“Now, gentlemen !” cried the Duchess, still simulating passion ; “what think you of this man who, not content to rob us, flings our mercy back by sharp complaints—twitts us with ingratitude ?”

“I always thought he was an arrant thief,” cried one.

“He was too proud for his office,” cried another.

“He was uncharitable to a degree,” said a third, “and turned the poor away, empty as they came.”

“And had he all these faults ?” said the Duchess, “and I who have known him so well ne’er dreamed of them.”

“Aye ! so please your Grace,” replied one of the officers, “and many more that we could mention, but that we should weary you in the telling.”

“Are they so numerous ?”

“It would take a summer’s day to speak them in.”

“That being so, ’tis well that he has gone. Leave us, good gentlemen. We would speak to our master of the horse.”

Making a low obeisance, the officers withdrew.

“What think you of these men, Bosola ?” demanded the Duchess, when they were alone.

“Men !” cried Bosola, “why, that they are true men ; for no other animal beneath God’s sun would show such base ingratitude. Why, there was not one of these men but would have stooped to tie Antonio’s shoe when he was in favour. If robbing hath been done, these men have had their

share of the plunder; for Antonio was liberality itself. poor gentleman."

"Poor; trust me, he has amply filled his coffers."

"Trust me, he was honest. Oh! you have thrown away the finest gem that graced your ducal coronet. He was a scholar of a refined wit and good understanding, polished by the diamond, education. A soldier who knew his worth; and deemed it as wrong to undervalue, as it would have been a sin to overrate it."

"But he was of base birth!"

"Are pedigrees of more value than virtues? To me it seems that the lowly shrub that bears good wholesome fruit is worth far more than a rotten oak that has decayed for centuries."

"Oh! your words are music in my ears," cried the Duchess.

"Indeed! I do not understand you."

"Oh! sweetest music, for he of whom you speak is my husband."

"Your husband; impossible. Never in this degenerate age would one so high as you stoop to wed virtue alone."

"Indeed 'tis true."

"Then are you most fortunate, and most bold. For you have set an example to the wealthy dames that they must follow, seeing the happiness that you shall gain. What a wondrous engine is thy soft white hand, to raise Antonio from a steward to a ducal throne."

"Thanks for your kind words; but you must be secret."

"As the grave."

"My husband has flown to Ancona. You must follow him with my jewels and treasure. I will follow you in a few days."

"Good! If I might suggest, I would, if I were you, feign a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Loretto, which is scarcely more than seven leagues from Ancona. By this you cover your flight, and avoid suspicion."

"Your advice is good, and shall be followed," said the Duchess, smiling, and holding her hand to him. "Now, leave me; I must prepare for your departure."

Bosola dropped on one knee, pressed the white hand to his lips, and rising slowly, left the room.

"Now, what a devil am I," he muttered, as he strode down the corridor, "to win a woman's secret from her thus, knowing that I must betray it. I must at once to Rome, and let the Duke and Cardinal know their sister's intention. I pray she

may escape in time, for a bird might as well look for mercy from a cat, as this poor trembling dove from the sleek cardinal!

CHAPTER VI.

THE Duchess believing solemnly in Bosola, entrusted him with her jewels and cash to bear to Antonio, in Ancona; little dreaming how the perfidious wretch would use the secret he had so basely obtained.

True to his purpose, Bosola, instead of hurrying to Ancona, made rapidly for Rome, where he made the brothers acquainted with their sister's intended flight.

Meanwhile, the Duchess had given out her intention of making a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Lady of Loretto—a circumstance which caused no little astonishment, and a great deal of praise from the superstitious Italian servants.

All was ready for the departure. The Duchess, dressed in a sombre garb, suiting the supposed religious nature of the journey, rode on a milk-white palfrey.

Cariola rode near to her, and behind them came servants, bearing the Duchess's two children. These again were followed by some half-dozen men, only partially armed, as the sacred purpose of the journey was sufficient safeguard against molestation.

It was a beautiful, bright morning. The golden corn waved by a gentle breeze seemed waving its head in time to the joyous tune poured out by the soaring lark that hung on outspread wings, in the clear air. Sweet dew-drops decked the shrubs and trees, and hung like diamond-beads upon the slender threads the spider had woven in the night.

It was a day to rejoice in; and it was with light hearts that the Duchess and her attendants rode on their way.

Forth into the pleasant valley rode the little procession, at a quick canter; then slacking their pace, they crept up a high hill, pausing on its summit a moment to gaze at the splendid view around them, and then commenced their descent into the valley on the other side.

Slowly they wound down the path, until, turning round a large projecting point, a man clad in complete armour, wearing his vizor down, so as to conceal his face, sprang forward and seized the bridle of the Duchess's palfrey.

"Halt!" he exclaimed, in a rough voice; "you cannot pass this way."

"And who will prevent me?" cried the Duchess, haughtily.

"These!" replied the man, and applying a whistle to his lips, he blew a shrill call.

In an instant a band of armed men, that had been concealed behind the different boulders of rock, sprang into the road, and disarmed the Duchess's attendants.

"This shall be heard of in Rome!" cried the Duchess, indignantly, "a holy pilgrimage stopped."

"Tut lady," cried the man, who was no other than Bosola in disguise, "it is known in Rome. Falsehood will no longer serve your purpose, you would go to Ancona, not Loretto. 'Tis not our lady you would pay your duty to, but your husband."

"And if it be, what then?"

"This: you must never see your husband more," said Bosola.

"Who art thou?" demanded the Duchess, "that dares thus arrogate the authority of the Fates?"

"I am your destiny. In other words your brothers' messenger."

"My brothers!" groaned the Duchess, who now perceived that she had been betrayed, although she had no suspicion by whom. "My brothers! then indeed I know my fate. To what prison will you conduct me?"

"To none; I lead you back to your own palace. Your brothers mean you safety and pity."

"Pity!" exclaimed the Duchess. "It is with such pity men preserve pheasants and partridges, until their death can render them more sport"

"Are these your children?" asked Bosola, pointing to the little ones.

"They are; as yet they cannot speak, but when they do I'll teach them to repeat my history, so that all men shall know my brothers cruelty, and curse them."

"As you will, madam; hatred is but a poor inheritance, and like a rusty gun, more often destroys he who holds it than him at whom it's aimed. But enough of this, our path is that by which you came."

Slowly and surely the cavalcade wound its way back to the palace. Not one word was spoken by the procession that had set out so gaily in the morning, and returned so sadly at noon.

It was evening by the time they reached the palace, and the

dark garments of night had already cast a heavy gloom over the country.

The large portals were slowly opened with a creaking sound as if they screamed with fright at seeing the poor lady's return, and the domestics stood round, unable to hide their grief.

Bosola conducted the Duchess in silence to her apartments, and, having placed a guard at the door, hurried away to another part of the building, where he found Duke Ferdinande impatiently awaiting his return.

"Well!" he exclaimed, "you have caged the bird, I find. How does she take her imprisonment?"

"In three ways. As a woman, with heart tremblings; as a princess, nobly; and being innocent, with resignation."

"Curses upon her," cried the Duke, "I will break her haughty spirit though her heart snap with it. I have a simple device wrought by my brother, the Cardinal, that I will now play on her. Go instantly and tell her that I would speak to her, but that I have taken a solemn oath never to look upon her face again; it must be in the dark. Therefore, see that in the Blue Room the lights be all removed, and that the windows be hung with heavy draperies. Thither conduct the Duchess, and I will join her there."

Bowing lowly, Bosola left the room, and conveyed the message to the Duchess, who received it without any mark of astonishment.

"So, my brother has come to witness my misery," she said.

"Not so, madam," replied Bosola, "it grieves me to tell you that the noble Duke has taken an oath never to look upon your face again; and, therefore, he desires that you will meet him in the Blue Room, where there are no lights."

"Is that to be my dungeon? If so, why do you not command me there, and not entreat?"

"Nay, madam; believe me it is true the Duke desires your presence."

"Tis well," said the Duchess, calmly, "conduct me to him."

Bosola led her to the Blue Room, and there left her.

The room, although termed the "Blue," was scarcely deserving of that appellation; for, though the heavy hangings that covered the walls were of that colour, they were of so dark a hue that anyone would have taken them for black.

These funereal curtains were drawn closely over the windows,

so as to exclude the slightest ray of light; whilst not the glimmer of a taper was there to illuminate the darkness.

With the feeling of one who enters a tomb, the Duchess entered this dismal chamber, and waited patiently the coming of the Duke.

Suddenly she was startled by hearing her brother's voice close beside her.

"Where are you?" he asked, in softer tones than she had expected.

"I am here, sir," she replied, in gentle accents.

"I have come to demand that you renounce this false and evil love, that has so much misled you."

"I know not such a love, sir," replied the Duchess nobly; "had I such a one hidden in my heart, I'd pluck my heart out for daring to harbour it."

"Why? dare you call your love to Antonio honest?" said the Duke.

"Aye; honest as heaven's own light!" she replied passionately.

"You still defy your brothers then?" cried Ferdinande, passionately.

"Nay, I would seek their pardon," replied the Duchess, "would they be kind; and, granting that I have been over hasty in this marriage, count it but a fault, and not a deadly sin."

"If you would have our pardon, you must declare your marriage false, your children illegitimate, renounce the world, and enter a convent!"

"Declare my children basely born?" cried the Duchess. "Never! Are you a man to dare to ask a mother to brand her little ones with shame. Is it for this you came? to taunt a forlorn woman, and enjoy her misery. If I had the strength of a man, I would make you answer this!"

"Enough! madam, enough!" cried the Duke, "I came to seal my peace with you. Here is a hand, to which you have vowed much love; you placed the ring upon the finger."

Under cover of the darkness, the Duke, with a devilish smile, managed to slip a dead man's hand into the Duchess's!

"I affectionately kiss it!" said the Duchess, believing it was her brother's, and that he had really forgiven her.

"Pray do," replied the Duke Ferdinande; I will leave the ring with you, and also the hand. Should you want the heart, it is near to you.

With a start of horror, the Duchess discovered that the hand she held was that of a corpse ; and throwing it from her, she screamed aloud for help.

"What oh ! Bosola !" cried the Duke ; "let the Duchess have lights enough to see that which she so dearly loves !"

Silently, to the Duchess's horror, the heavy curtains that covered the end of the room, were drawn apart, and by a dull light she beheld the dead body of her husband stretched on a funeral bier.

She stood gazing in horror at this terrible scene, whilst a hollow voice seemed to chaunt more than speak the following sentence,—

"Here is the piece from which the hand was taken. Your brothers send you this sad spectacle, so that when you know Antonio is no more, the love that has caused your ruin may die also. So that hereafter you may wisely cease to grieve for that which cannot be recovered !"

With one long, withering shriek of agony, as if she had only just been able to realise the terrible scene that was passing before her, she rushed forward to clasp the dead body of her husband, but the dark, heavy curtains rolled together, and the Duchess sank insensible upon the floor.

CHAPTER VII.

A MONTH had nearly passed since the dreadful scene we have just related had happened ; but to the vexation of the brothers, they found that Constantia, the Duchess of Malfi, was as firm as ever in her determination to proclaim her marriage legal, and her children legitimate.

To prevent this the Duke and Cardinal had declared her mad, and had actually carried their cruelty to such an extent, to as have some dozen mad people placed in the rooms surrounding those of the Duchess, in hopes that the noises made by these poor lunatics, might either terrify their sister into compliance with their wishes, or really to make her insane.

But grief seemed to have given the Duchess fresh strength, and her calm patience, quiet resignation, and gentle wisdom, defeated the Cardinal's designs.

Now those she loved were gone, she seemed to have lost all

Neither threats of violence, nor the constant association with the maniacs, seemed to have any influence on her. She remained patient, but firm.

Cariola, her waiting woman was her constant companion and attendant, and consequently a fellow sufferer ; but following her mistress's example, she bore all with resignation.

They were seated one evening, listening to the dismal howls of the lunatics—who seemed by the noise they made, as if they would force an entrance into the very apartments where the Duchess was—when they were startled by the solemn tolling of a bell.

"List ! madam," cried Cariola, "what noise is that. "Oh ! this is terrible."

"Fear not, Cariola," replied the Duchess, encouragingly, "this is but some further trial that is placed upon me. You they have no ill-feeling to, and therefore you need not fear."

She had scarcely ceased speaking when a side door opened, and Bosola, disguised as an old man, entered the room.

He was dressed in a long black gown, that reached to his ankles ; on his head was a black cap, whilst a large white false beard covered the lower part of his face and fell down beneath his girdle.

No one would have known Bosola is this disguise ; and, feeling confident of that fact, he advanced to the middle of the room, and fixed his eyes upon the Duchess.

"This is one of the murderers, your grace," said Cariola, clinging to the Duchess, "shall we not call for help."

"And to what purpose, Cariola ? My heart has called for help until it is nearly broken. We will speak to this man," said the Duchess. Then turning to Bosola she said, in gentle tones, "Who are you ?"

"I have come to make your tomb," he replied, sternly.

"My tomb ? You speak as if I were on my death bed," said the Duchess. "Am I so sick ?"

"Yes ; and the more dangerously so, since you do not know it."

"You are not mad," replied the Duchess ; "your speech is far too sensible. Do you not know me ?"

"Yes."

"Who am I, then ?"

"Food for worms ; a mere puff-paste that crumbles at the touch

"Am I not your Duchess ?"

"You are some great woman, for time has driven his sharp plough across thy forehead at least twenty years sooner than he would have done to a merry milkmaid's."

"I am Duchess of Malfi still."

"That is the cause your sleep is broken. A coronet is often but a leaden crown that weighs down the head."

"You speak too plainly."

"My trade is to flatter the dead, not the living. I am a tomb maker."

"And you came to make my tomb?"

"Yes."

"Let me know fully what is the meaning of this dismal preparation. What is your purpose?"

"I will show you."

Stepping back a few paces, he opened the door, and two men dressed in black entered the apartment. Large black masks concealed their faces, so that not a feature could be seen.

Solemnly, and with an awful silence, the two men unwrapped a pall, which they showed to the Duchess and her terrified companion.

Then they drew forth a long silken rope.

"There," said Bosola, are presents from your brothers; may they be welcome, for they bring you release."

"I have so much obedience in my blood," replied the Duchess calmly, "that I wish it were in their veins to do them good."

"Let that be your last wish," said Bosola; "the soul flies highest that is borne on forgiveness."

"Oh! my sweet lady," cried Cariola; "shall we not call for help?"

"To whom?" demanded the Duchess, "to the poor mad people in the other rooms. No, King Death approaches, let me meet him like a Duchess—with awe and dignity."

Clinging to her beloved mistress, Cariola screamed aloud for help, in spite of all the murderers could do to prevent her, until, Bosola and one of his men had to drag her into another room.

"What death have you prepared for me?" demanded the Duchess.

"Strangling—these men are your executioners."

"I forgive them! they do no more than nature would done within a certain time."

"Does not death afright you?"

"Why should it? None need fear who are innocent."

"And yet the manner of your death might frighten you."

"And why? Would it be easier to have one's throat cut with diamonds or shot to death with pearls. I know death has many doors for men to enter by; but all lead to the same place. Tell my brothers' that I forgive them. Kill me how you will, but give my body to my women!"

The executioners placed the rope around her fair, white throat, and stood ready to perform their dread office.

"Pull, and pull hard!" cried the Duchess, "for you pull down heaven upon me. Yet stay! Heaven's gates are not so highly arched as princes' palaces; those that would enter there must go upon their knees!"

She sank gently upon her knees, and clasped her hands as if in prayer. At a sign from Bosola, the men seized the rope, and in a few moments the noble lady's sufferings were over.

"There," said Bosola to the executioners, "our dreadful task is over, so get hence, lest the punishment for this great crime should seize upon us now, and blast us as we stand."

With bowed down heads, the murderers—men used to all sorts of crimes—stole from the room where rested the lovely victim's body.

Bosola fixed his eyes upon the beautiful face—now so cold and white—and felt as if those glazed eyes fascinated him.

At length he was aroused from his stupor by the entrance of the Duke Ferdinande.

"Is she dead?" demanded the Duke, in a hollow whisper.

"She is what you have long wished to make her. Fix your eyes here," he continued, pointing to the corpse. "Do you not weep? are you not afraid?"

"Afraid! who knows of this but ourselves?"

"God! Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out. The elements of water sink into the earth, but blood flies upwards and bedews the heavens!"

"Cover her face," cried the Duke, "I cannot bear to look upon it. She died young."

"I think not so," replied Bosola, "her infelicity had too many days. Oh! would that I had not performed this deed!"

"Let me see her face again," said the Duke, and bending down, as Bosola uncovered the lovely countenance, he raised her head upon his knee, and gazed upon it for some moments in agony.

"Constantia! Constantia!" he cried. "why will you not answer me, my gentle sister? Speak to me—speak to me!"

"You have crushed out the spark," replied Bosola, "and cannot call it back again."

"Why did you kill her?" cried the Duke, springing to his feet, and glaring at Bosola, who recoiled before the terrible fire that played within his eyes; "had you no pity, that you could do so foul a deed? Oh! Constantia, Constantia!"

"Had you no pity, that you ordered it? Both you and the Cardinal did give directions for the deed."

"The Cardinal!—the devil!—he set me on to this," cried the Duke, "he with his specious way, and silken tongue. May heaven have no mercy on you both."

"Come, come, sir," cried Bosola, "this is madness indeed. Let me remind you of the reward you promised me."

"Reward! What would you claim money for your devilish deed. By what authority did you kill her?"

"By yours."

"Mine! Was I her judge; what right had I to condemn her? Fool, you have transgressed the law, and, by heaven, you shall die for it!"

Rushing on Bosola, the Duke grasped him by the throat, and a fearful struggle ensued.

Bosola was of the two the strongest man; but a strange fire lit up the Duke's eyes: white foam mingled with blood flecked his lips, and an almost superhuman strength seemed to possess him, and with the ease of a giant, he dragged Bosola out of the chamber, towards the Blue room.

A sudden horror seized upon Bosola, as he saw these fearful signs fixed in the Duke's face; for he knew that he was in the clutches of a *madman*!

Terrified at this fearful situation, Bosola cried aloud for help, and soon a number of servants rushed to his assistance, and released him from the deadly grasp.

"Seize the Duke!" cried Bosola, "he is mad, and has strangled his sister, who now lies dead in that room. I tried to save her, but would have shared her fate, had it not been for your most timely arrival."

The servants seized the Duke, who fled shrieking madly down the corridor, and bore him away to his room, where he had to be strictly watched, for he had become a hopeless lunatic.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOSOLA no sooner discovered that the Duke was hopelessly mad, than he determined to set off at full speed to Rome, and claim the reward for the diabolical deed he had performed, from the Cardinal.

Horrible as the Duchess's death had been, the fate of the Duke was even worse.

Day and night that cold, clear-cut face, seemed hanging over him, with a halo of reproach around it, constantly before his eyes.

Each moment of the day he called upon Constantia to speak to him, and prayed for mercy ; begging her to drive away the Furies that haunted him.

Somehow Bosola took a strange delight in seeing the Duke's agonies. It may have been the same feeling said to be felt by those in pain, loving to see other's suffering ; for remorse had seized upon Bosola's heart. He had killed many, but the fair face of Constantia—her unrepenting look, her gentle, kindly ways—rushed back upon him.

He seemed to have committed three murders in one.

He had killed a woman, love, and goodness, and hope of heaven seemed shut from him.

A man of extraordinary courage, Bosola dared not venture to Rome by himself. He had done it often before, but now *he was never alone!* Unlike the Duke, he saw no phantom, no eager, imploring face was pressed to his, or hung like poisoned honey on his lips. But somehow, there seemed low surging in the wind ; the sky had lost its azure tint, and turned a purple, as if "bedewed with blood." He dared not be alone, for *he never felt alone!* An indescribable terror ; the feeling of something that was near and yet far off, hung about him. Cold drops of perspiration would gather on his forehead, at the slightest unexpected noise. No ! he could *not* ride alone.

Taking some half-dozen of the servants, who had least to do with the household—he cared not to have them armed ; he wanted their presence only, for he feared not mortal foe—he mounted his horse, and rode from the palace.

Palace ! mad-house ; in mocking, the Duke had brought those lunatics there ; little dreaming that the hand of a stern Providence would reach his Ducal throne, and make him the least pitied and lowest of them all.

The night was fading into morning when he started. The grey, weird slumbering of the coming day, crept slowly over the earth ; first touching on the hill-tops, then falling with a modest light into the gloomy valleys.

The running streams—the merry lark that sprang so blithely up to heaven, had no music, but rather a reproach to Bosola. *They* were full of life—and he had taken it. He had put part of nature into death—and even nature, the great mother of all, seemed to have turned against him.

He had no hope—and worse than all, no wish for hope. He felt that all joy hereafter was taken from him. His only wish on earth, was to drown thought—to pass his days in dissipation, the cheap madness of despair.

At every hostelry at which he arrived, he alighted and treated his followers ; scattering the money as freely as he had committed crime. The men declared him a prince—he felt himself a devil.

The evening sun had sunk when he rode into the gates of Rome.

Leaving his followers at a tavern, Bosola rode on to the Cardinal's palace, and at once demanded to see his excellency.

After a little delay, he was shown up into a superb apartment, wherein he found the Cardinal reading a novel by the aid of a lamp, the oil of which was so beautifully scented, as to perfume the whole room.

"Well," said the Cardinal, "how has the—the affairs been managed?"

"Managed with the speed of the devil!" said Bosola, "for with it we shall all find hell."

"She is dead then?" said the Cardinal.

"Aye!" exclaimed Bosola ; "as thy virtue and soul. Her body was destroyed ; and with it your salvation !"

"You speak like a fool," replied the Cardinal, "or else your brain is turned."

"Perhaps it is," replied Bosola, "had you caught the breath of that fair soul as it sped to heaven, carrying with it the news of our foul crime ; it would have blasted your proud heart as it has withered mine."

"Did she complain?"

"No ! she put her trust where we dare not."

"Where?"

"In God ! and met her fate as we shall not—in peace,"

"You are romantic, and speak by the card. How fares our brother, the Duke?"

"Why, he is blest, and yet accursed. For he is mad, and mad people they say forget their troubles—but remember this, he has good company."

"Good company!" exclaimed the Cardinal; "if he be mad who keeps him company."

"The best and purest of your family, your murdered sister's ghost. Murdered by you for love of gold, and that false phantom pride which clings around old families like ivy over a rotting wall, or ruin!"

"Tut, tut, Bosola!" said the Cardinal, carelessly, "the fearful news you bring has turned your brain. You need refreshment. Here in my cabinet, I have some choice Falernian. You must try a glass. It will relieve you from these dreary thoughts that hang like cobwebs over the brain."

Stepping to a cupboard, the Cardinal drew forth a quaintly-shaped bottle, and an exquisitely cut glass, which he filled with the golden wine.

"There, drink!" he cried, as he held out the glass; "why, man, the best plaster to a broken conscience, is the juice of the grape. Hark to a fable. One day the god Bacchus fell in love with a fair daughter of earth, whom Jove loved well. The joyous god triumphed over the Thunderer. Whereon, the mighty Jove, hot, streaming in his rage, placed conscience on the world, the greatest scourge man ever had. 'Ho, ho!' cried Bacchus, 'does he think to have me so? I'll drown his curse,' and squeezing a bunch of grapes, the ruddy juice burst forth and killed the bane. Come, drink, and drown your care."

Seizing the goblet in his hand, Bosola, with a laugh, drank off the draught.

"There," he cried, "the deed is done, so let it rest. If conscience pricks me now, I have the salve. Where is the reward?"

"You have it," replied the Cardinal, with a fiendish laugh, "the deadliest poison in all Italy now courses through your veins."

With a wild scream, Bosola sprang upon the Cardinal, and fixed his hands upon his throat.

"Release me! release me!" whispered the Cardinal, with gasping breath, "what I said was false."

"You lie!" roared Bosola, "for I feel the molten fluid rushing

through my veins. I stood by and saw your sister strangled. You now suffer her fate. Ha ! ha ! ha ! your plausible tongue lolls from your mouth ; your eyes stare. Gaze into heaven, and look for the last time upon your sister !”

“He is dead !” said Bosola, staggering to his feet, “dead, and I ! Oh ! I am dying too. My blood boils within me. Help ! help ! Oh ! help ! May heaven have mercy on me !”

The cries were heard, and the servants hurried in, but only to find **two** corpses. Thus was the Duchess revenged.

A SHARK! A SHARK!

It is rather better than fifteen years since I left Liverpool in the good ship *Wellington*. She was a poor tub of a thing, could neither "run" nor "beat," and she stunk of molasses enough to knock you down, and swarmed with cockroaches into the bargain. She was, in short, "a sugar ship" bound to Jamaica.

We had six passengers on board: two young men of the name of Perkins, going out as book-keepers; Mrs. Bedford and a daughter just grown up; a young man of the name of Andrews, and myself.

Mrs. Bedford was the wife of a merchant in Kingston; Arthur Andrews was an ensign in the —th, at that time in Jamaica; and I was coming out here as book-keeper at Smiling Valley, where I have been ever since.

Ellen Bedford was a beautiful girl—tall, graceful, and lady-like. It is scarcely necessary to say that we four young men were all charmed with her the first day she made her appearance on deck, which was not till after the gale had subsided. In this she was quite right, I think; no amount of personal charms could stand their ground against the ravages of seasickness.

We were all ready to jump down each other's throats a dozen times a day, as to who should sit by her at dinner, at breakfast, at supper; who should accompany her in her walk on deck; who should fetch her work, her book, et cetera, et cetera. We could not all be continually with her, as we each wanted to be; and as for any one ceding his right, or rather, what he considered his right, it wasn't thought of: we were all far too selfish for that.

So things went on for nearly a month—Mrs. Bedford always smiling, and civil to all of us. "She was so much obliged for

the care we took of her dear daughter," she said; especially civil and polite she was to me, and to the two Perkins: to Arthur Andrews she scarcely spoke, so little indeed that I quite felt for him sometimes; for he was as attentive to Ellen as we were, and deserved, I thought, quite as much praise from the old lady. He, however, did not seem to feel the neglect in the least. Ha! ha! what a blind fool I was, to be sure!

We had made a capital passage, considering the old tub we were in, so far; but now the wind failed us altogether, and for six days we never had steerage way on the ship. Round and round on her heel she slowly swung, according to the currents, but never a foot did she forge ahead for six days. Have you ever been becalmed for a week in 68° W. long., and between 15° and 20° N. lat.?—in short, off the Island of St. Domingo or Hayti? If you have, you can possibly remember how the sun set all awnings at defiance; how it beat through everything, and burned up everything; how the pitch stuck to your feet as you walked the deck, in spite of "wet swabs" and buckets of water; how you were forced below when the sun was vertical, its grilling heat, being too great for human nature to withstand; and how you were half stifled for air when you took refuge in the cabin.

As soon as the sun had gone down in a blaze of glory, mingling sea and sky together in one universal halo of purple and gold, utterly impossible to describe, we all assembled upon deck to enjoy the cool evening air and the refreshing darkness. Maybe that is an unusual term to apply to the night; but let me tell you that, after the glare of the sun and the glare of the sea during the live long day, "darkness" was as refreshing to the eyes as ever was draught of water to a thirsty soul.

It was on just such a night as I have faintly and most imperfectly attempt to describe that we were all assembled upon the deck of the *Wellington*. Mrs. Bedford was knitting: she could knit as well by moonlight as by candle-light, or, for the matter of that, without any light at all, I believe. Her usual smile of content was on her "take it easy" countenance. That term suits so exactly the expression of her placid face that I cannot but use it. Ellen was talking and laughing with Robert and James Perkins. Arthur Andrews was leaning over the side, "whistling for a wind;" and I was looking at Ellen under the pleasing delusion that no one saw me. Presently I arose and strolled towards the spot where Andrew was standing,

still whistling, apparently with an unoccupied mind and a heart at ease.

Arthur Andrews was dark, tall, and handsome ; he was also clever and agreeable. To none of these advantages could either of the Perkinses or myself lay the slightest claim. I was not the hard-grained chap in those days that I am now ; sun and sorrow have burned and seamed my face since then ; but I was never a beauty or a wit : and as to the two Perkinses, they were both of them thick-set, ungainly fellows, and as stupid as owls—worse, for they were always giggling, which owls are not. It was, therefore, not suprising that at first starting Arthur should have distanced us all hollow.

Ellen evidently and unmistakably liked him best : how could she help it ? He had it all his own way : we three blockheads still fluttered about her like moths round a candle. It's an old, threadbare simile, I know, but there is no better one invented that I ever heard of.

"What are you looking at, Arthur ?" I said.

"Sharks," he replied ; don't you see them ?"

I saw there was something moving in the water close to the side of the vessel, but I could not see what it was : I said so.

"Look more attentively and you will see their fins and tails—there ! there ! can't you see them now ?"

His exclamations brought the others to his side, all except Ellen—where was she ? Ha ! I caught sight of the skirt of her white dress as she disappeared below. My heart beat loud and fast ; now was my time, when they were all watching the sharks.

I hurried down the companion-ladder ; I turned my head in descending, hoping that I had managed to slip away unperceived. Ellen had gone to her cabin, no doubt ; I must wait. Presently I heard the cabin door open, and footsteps approaching ; it was too dark to distinguish features, but the figure was enough. She came quite close to me ; she was going on deck again.

"Ellen," I whispered.

"Who's there ? Is that you, Arthur ?" she said, softly.

Oh, fool that I was, not even then to have my eyes opened.

I was preparing to follow her, when a hand was laid on my shoulder. I started violently.

"Who is that ?" I cried.

"Gordon," said a voice in my ear, which I knew was Arthur's, "I have seen your attention to Ellen, and it is only frank to

tell you that she is engaged to me. For reasons unnecessary to explain to you, we thought it advisable to keep our engagement a secret at present."

I shall leave you to imagine my feelings on this announcement. My heart grew chill, and all my dreams of bliss vanished. What I said to Arthur at the moment I know not, if indeed I said anything. But his generous spirit had attached me to him, and I felt that he had acted kindly as well as frankly in telling me how matters stood. I needed not to explain to him that if I had given any uneasiness it was unconsciously on my part. The warm grasp of his hand knit me the more to him in true friendship.

I had no heart to go on deck again that night, so I turned in.

Early in the morning Arthur came, and, in his usual frank way, without taking any notice of what had passed the previous night, asked if I would come and have a bathe, as he had got leave to go out in the Captain's gig.

Too glad to show that no ill-feeling towards him remained, I said,—

"All right; I will follow you on deck directly."

When I reached the deck, towel in hand, I found Arthur trying to persuade the mate of the watch to let him have the Captain's gig. It seems that though the Captain had told Arthur he might take his gig, he had not spoken to the mate on the subject.

"Captain Parks has given strict orders to the men not to bathe on any account whatever; and right enough too, for the sea is alive with sharks," I heard the mate say.

"Well, well, we won't bathe, then," replied Arthur, impatiently; "but as we *are* up we might as well have a pull; perhaps we might 'turn a turtle.' Oh! here is Gordon. Banks says we shall be devoured by sharks if we bathe, so we had best give that up; but it's a splendid morning for a pull—what do you say?"

"I should like a pull of all things."

"Leave your towels behind you, then," said Banks, who was a 'cute Yorkshireman; "you can turn a turtle without towels, I expect."

Arthur laughed, chucked his towel on to the capstan, and looking over the side and saying,—

"The oars are in the gig, I see; come along, Gordon," he lowered himself into the boat.

I placed my towel alongside of his and followed him ; but I could not joke and be merry as he could : I was sad at heart, and I suppose showed it by my countenance ; for Banks observed, as he cast off the painter,—

I don't think Mr. Gordon seems as fond of turtle-turning as you are, Mr. Andrews ; he looks as solemn as a judge passing sentence of death."

I don't suppose that remark improved my appearance. I did not speak ; neither did Arthur, who was busily employed shiping the tiller, and perhaps did not hear it.

"Will you steer, or shall I ?" he said, without looking up.

"You," I replied ; "I never steer straight."

He shoved off from the ship ; I drew a pair of sculls out from the bottom of the boat and pulled over the calm, placid surface of the sleeping sea.

We talk of "stillness" on land ; but no one can realise the true meaning of the word who has not experienced the stillness of the sea.

It was too early for any one to be stirring on board the *Wellington* ; the watch was slumbering on the deck ; the mate alone showed signs of vitality, though not very demonstrative signs ; for he was standing motionless by the capstan with our towels in his hands.

On the deep was perfect stillness ; the sound of my sculls turning in the row-locks and dipping in the water, alone broke the silence that reigned above, beneath, around us.

By this time the eastern board was ruddy with the approach of day—ruddy, ay, bloody was the more appropriate term : the whole eastern horizon glowed with a deep, red sanguine hue, such as I had never seen before. And now the sun rises above the sea-line, blinding me with a flood of golden light.

When we were close to the ship, returning from an hour's pull, in stepping over the "thwart" I stumbled against a loose "stretcher," tried to recover my balance, stumbled still worse, caught my foot in the coils of the "painter," and was pitched head-foremost into the sea, clutching the gun'ale as I went over, and pretty nearly upsetting the boat.

When I rose to the surface, and again caught hold of the gun'ale, I saw Arthur in the same predicament as myself, on the other side of the gig.

"A pretty mess you have made of it," he said, as he wiped the salt-water out of his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Come, climb back again while I steady her; as soon as you are in, do the like for me, and I'll follow you."

I soon managed to get back into the boat, Arthur hanging on the other side to keep her on an even keel: that accomplished, I sat upon the starboard gun'ale.

"Now, then! in with you," I said; "remember there are sharks in these seas."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I saw a fin of a shark above the water, not ten yards from the boat. It was not stationary, but darting with terrible swiftness straight at Arthur.

"Jump in!" I shouted, "jump!—a shark is coming at you!"

He raised himself instantly as high out of the water as he could; his body was already on a level with the gun'ale—another moment and he would be safe—but that moment was denied him.

I saw his danger, but I could not help him. Had I quitted my place to pull him in, he would have fallen back into the sea, and I must have followed him.

On came the shark like a flash of lightning. I saw his white belly, as he turned to seize his victim. I saw his open jaws. I saw his cruel gleaming teeth as he raised his terrible head out of the water.

A cry of agony, a look of despair, and Arthur is torn from his hold; I start forward just in time to save myself from falling in on the other side.

Never, never, shall I forget that last despairing look as he was drawn down beneath the surface, grasping frantically at the air, struggling hard for life, but struggling in vain.

And now a scene was enacted, if possible still more dreadful than that of his death. The sea was suddenly alive with sharks; the water boiled and foamed as they darted hither and thither, fighting for food.

At the side of the ship stood Ellen, pale and motionless, while her beloved Arthur was being torn to pieces and devoured before her eyes.

True, she could not see the actual tragedy which was going on beneath the waves; but she had beheld him torn from the boat, and the rushing of the voracious animals to and fro in the ensanguined water told its own hideous tale.

Pale, motionless, and speechless she stood, till the horrible repast was over, and the sea ceased to be agitated by the fierce

cannibals of the deep ; then, without a word, or even a groan, she fell as though she were shot.

We had all been so horrified and awe-struck by the dreadful scene we were witnessing, that no one had the presence of mind to remove her from the harrowing sight : she saw it all.

She died raving mad before sunset that day.

ON BOARD A SLAVER.

BY ONE OF THE TRADE.

ON a wet and cloudy morning in the month of April, 18—, I was sitting before the fire of a boarding-house in New York, ruminating on what should be my future mode of life. I had returned some time from my last voyage, which had been to the East Indies, and my funds were rapidly decreasing, and compelled me to look out for another ship.

While my mind was following this train of thought, I became suddenly aware of voices conversing in a low tone outside my door, which on approaching nearer suddenly died away, and I heard a knock.

On my saying "Come in," there entered the landlord of the house, accompanied by a stranger, to whom he introduced me as Captain Manwell, saying that the gentleman, if I was agreeable, had something to communicate; he then withdrew, leaving the stranger with me.

I begged him to be seated, and to commence what he had to say.

He was a man rather below the middle height, with dark flashing eyes, and hair of the same hue, regular features, and a pale foreign-looking complexion; he altogether bore the appearance of anything but a sailor.

Having taken a chair, and drawn closer to the fire, he told me that he was in command of a ship about to proceed to the west coast of Africa on a trading voyage for palm-oil, and that he wanted some trustworthy men to man her, and that on referring to my landlord for aid, he had strongly recommended me; he had therefore paid me this visit to offer me a vacancy. Now these proceedings seemed so strange and mysterious that I could plainly see there was something at the bottom of them;

so looking him steadfastly in the face, I asked him if he meant by the trading voyage "the game."

He replied yes, that I was right; and having heard from my host that I spoke both Spanish and Portuguese fluently, he offered me a berth of trust, knowing that my knowledge as a linguist would be of great use to him.

After some consideration I consented to go, for my desire to make money and my love of adventure urged me to do it. We then made some arrangements, and I, on my part, promised inviolable secrecy, he left, having given me directions to go down on the following morning to the docks, where I should find him on board the bark *Flora*, where we should make and settle all the arrangements.

I accordingly went down the following morning, and finding he had not yet arrived on board, I employed my time in taking a survey of the ship.

I found her to be a long, low, black craft, of 160 tons burden, bark-rigged, with raking masts and sharp bow. She had a raised quarter-deck, with saloon and cabins underneath, for the captain and mates; and a top-gallant forecastle for the crew. She had also, I found afterwards, a "between-deck," which came in pieces like a Chinese puzzle, each piece being numbered and marked: but at that time it was lying about in the hold to all appearance lumber.

I also noticed the way the cargo was being stowed. At the bottom of the hold, for the ground-tier, were laid bricks, and on the top of them a vast quantity of water-butts, some empty, and some full of rum of that very common sort which goes by the name of nigger rum; also large quantities of rice, beans, etc.—all intended not for cargo, but for slave stores; while, on the top of these, was closely stowed a general cargo of cotton-pieces, red flannel, beads, old muskets, and knives.

The object in stowing the hold in this manner was to place the slave-stores, and all other suspicious-looking articles, out of sight—because, in case of being boarded by any man-of-war, they have a right not only to demand the ship's papers, but to search the cargo—a precaution which we afterwards found to be well needed.

When loaded, the *Flora* only drew six feet of water. Just as I completed these surveys I was hailed by the steward, who told me the captain was asking for me.

I accordingly went in and signed articles for the voyage. I

agreed to ship as an able seaman, but was to be paid extra for interpreting. I received fifteen dollars a month as seaman. There were twelve others besides myself, the captain, two mates, and a steward.

Two days after this, the ship having completed her cargo, we all went on board and sailed.

We then shaped our course for St. Paul de Loando, in lat. $8^{\circ} 48'$ south, and lon. $13^{\circ} 8'$ east, which is to windward of the entrance of the Congo—the Congo being in lat. $4^{\circ} 39'$ north, and long. $12^{\circ} 9'$ east.

We had a pleasant voyage of seventy-one days. Nothing in particular occurred during the passage. I found, on inquiry, that I was the only seaman on board who really knew the motive of our voyage; and when I hinted to them what it really was they quite laughed at the idea.

When off the coast of Sierra Leone, we met the American man-of-war *Marion*; they sent a boat on board of us, with the second lieutenant.

He examined our papers, etc., which of course he could find no fault with, although it was very evident he smelt a rat. While the officer was in the cabin examining the papers, I looked over the side, and was startled to find that one of the crew in the man-of-war's cutter was an old chum of mine; he did not know me, on account of my foreign appearance, for I had allowed my beard to grow, but on my calling him by name, he recognised me.

He came up, and we had a long talk over old times. Of course they all knew who we really were, but they could not seize us, as we had nothing on board to justify the act. The boat at last left, but the lieutenant's report not satisfying the commodore, he came off himself, although to no purpose.

Again, on making the Congo, we encountered the English man-of-war *Triton*, who also boarded us, but with the same success as the *Marion*.

We sailed and kedged for about forty miles up the river, where we found a village of the name Port O'Lania.

We made fast to a wharf alongside one of the stores to which we were consigned, where we landed our cargo, and then commenced getting ready for sea.

Our cargo being landed, we now looked out for a cloudy night to slip down the river, for we knew from our agents that the *Triton* was on the look-out for us, and was then stationed at

the mouth of the river, to catch us as we came out. But before leaving, the Captain called all hands aft, and made known to them the true purpose of our voyage.

They had already begun to suspect what it really was. He said that if any man wanted to leave the ship he would give him all the wages that were due to him, and also three extra months' pay as a present ; but as nobody liked to be put out on the coast of Guinea alone, they all agreed to sail with him. We then shipped a number of extra men that had been left at various times from the ships.

One afternoon, after we had laid at Port O'Lania (so-called from all the houses being of wood) for above ten days, we unmoored, and dropped down the river, till we came within ten miles of the *Triton*, where we arrived at 8 p.m.

We then anchored, and lay there till 10 p.m. The moon was then set, so after extinguishing every light, we dropped silently down.

We found that the *Triton* was lying at the entrance and wide part of the river. We went down with the tide, and setting sail as quietly as possible, managed successfully to elude the vigilance of the *Tritons*.

As soon as we were clear of the land we set all sail, and under a press of canvass stood right out to sea. The next morning we commenced getting the ship ready for her live cargo.

We first tore up and destroyed the ship's papers, and then everything with the name of the ship on ; we painted out the ship's name on the stern, and everything that looked like American, flags in particular.

We all went by other names, so that a man could not betray any of the others by telling his name. The captain went by the name of Don Pedro, and everyone else had his name to his fancy.

We then stowed all the stores in such a way that we could get at them easily. The water-casks we stowed all bung up, with the bungs all out, and a hose leading out of each hole, for over the casks we stowed a platform or deck of planks ; and by means of these hoses we could pump the fresh water out ; and when empty, we put salt-water in the casks to ballast the ship, and then stowed the stores of sugar, rum, biscuit, etc., in rotation as we should want them.

We then put our main-deck or lower-deck together ; for, as I before said, when we left New York the deck was composed of

pieces to be put together when required, since, had we left with a regular lower-deck, it would have looked suspicious.

We then got our armaments up, consisting of four 6-pounders, two long brass 18-pounders, and four brass 12-pounders, besides small arms ; so that it would have been impossible for any man-of-war to take us by boats.

But nowadays, since those are all propelled by steam, the slavers stand a bad chance, for steam has not been introduced into the slave-trade.

Now that the interior of the ship was ready, we had to look after our gear aloft. We commenced by taking the wedges from between the masts and decks, so that the masts might give with the press of canvas ; and then we cut the beams that go fore and aft, for the same reason—namely, that the ship might go easier.

During the time that these preparations were being made the ship had sailed within seventy miles of the island of Ascension, and was now on the other tack, bearing up for a place a little above the Congo, about fifty miles from St Paul de Loando, where we had agreed to touch for the slaves when they were ready.

But now we were destined to encounter a fearful hurricane that almost shipwrecked the vessel, and our hopes at the same time.

Presently a cloud, at first “no bigger than a man’s hand,” rose up and spread all over the sky. The water changed, as it always does, from blue to black, and an indescribable gloom seemed to rest upon all nature. None but those who have seen and felt it know what a mysterious pause seems to take place before the tempest hurls its first stroke at the devoted ship. It actually seems as if the sea and sky almost dreaded to begin the dreadful conflict that would convulse both as if with terror and rage.

We had not long to wait. There was barely time to make all fast, to double reef every sail, and to fasten down the hatches before the fierce wind was sweeping over the water, and covering the tops of the waves with foam, and bending our ship down till her main-yard nearly dipped into the raging sea.

One moment we were tossed like a dead leaf before the gale ; then up, up, higher, higher, upon a world of water, from whose summit we could see all the sea and sky roaring and wrestling in wild confusion ; then down, down till hope and life seemed

shut out by the hills and precipices of water that hung over us and shut us in; then the hill of water that had rolled on towards us toppled over and fell, beating us down as a drowning rat is beaten down to die, while every man clung to ropes or spars till the ship rose, and, shaking the water from her decks, staggered on bravely.

That was years ago, but I see the scene now with all its wild terrors.

Even the Captain looked grave as a wreck drifted past—a confused mass of wood and sails and cordage, a tremendous sea now swept over us, and when we came out of it one man was gone.

All we could see of his fate, though we knew what it was too well, was a floating object like clothes borne away into the darkness—all we could hear was one cry that was drowned by the din around as soon as his drowning terror made him utter it.

But our ship was spared, she weathered the gale. The next morning the rising sun poured his flood of golden light athwart the waters, the blue sky looked calm; and the only signs of last night's storm were the rolling billows which seemed to heave and swell like the bosom of a sobbing child, and the vacant place of our poor messmate, who we should never see more.

However, we soon forgot our troubles, and with the loss of a gun, some ballast and a quantity of valuable stores, all hands set to work with the sailors proverbial cheerfulness, and speedily she was ship-shape once more.

Ships sometimes wait as long as three months and more for the slaves, while the agents are collecting them in the interior. We were lucky, having only to wait thirty days. Our reason for going so far away from land, after leaving the Congo, was this: we knew that the *Triton*, as soon as she found we had escaped her, would coast along the shore, thinking that we should do the same as some other ships erroneously do—namely, sail along the coast and secret themselves, or pick up detachments of slaves as they go along; but our captain, being an old hand, knew better, for by going right out to sea they would lose our scent.

After making the shore about St. Paul de Loando, we sailed with the south-east trade-wind along the coast, till we arrived near a place called Ambriz, where we saw them ashore throwing out private signals; we accordingly anchored near the coast at 7 p.m.

The agents came off with the slaves in lighters, containing about 200 each. They were all lashed together with thongs of hide. They were passed up and sent into the hold. There were altogether 811.

As soon as they were on board we made all sail. Our men were armed, and appointed into watches, as we were obliged to keep a very strict eye on them, to see that they did not get at the stores, or fight with each other—for among them were many different tribes, all at variance with one another, so that sometimes our hold was like a small hell, and the sentinel had frequently to jump down among them to separate the combatants.

The lighters came alongside at 7 p.m., and at 8 p.m. we loosened sail, and squaring the yards to the trade, let slip the anchor and chain in three fathoms' water.

We shaped our course for Ascension, which we soon sighted, having a strong south-east trade abaft us. We passed Ascension, and then steered for 2,022 miles right away to the westward.

We did this to get out of the track of ships, this not being the ordinary route of ships bound to the West Indies. After that we steered to the southward, and passed to the southward and westward of Jamaica, just seeing the land in the distance, and then rounding the Isle of Pines.

Before leaving Congo we shipped a double crew, so that now we had thirty-five seamen before the mast; but all our services were well needed, for what with accelerating the speed of the ship, by making alterations in her, and attending to the slaves, we all had our hands full.

A certain number of us were told off for the latter duty, I being one of them. My department was to take charge of the women.

We kept the ship as clean as possible, for filth is the root of all evil on board a ship.

At sunrise, or not later than 5 a.m. every morning the slaves were all turned up on deck, and large tubs were produced. A gang of them were made to keep those tubs supplied with salt-water while they were in use.

Our mode of ablution was rather a novel one; it reminded me of sheep shearing—or, at least, the washing of sheep previous to shearing—in Devonshire and other counties.

A circle of fifteen or twenty were made to squat on their

hams round the tubs, while one of us stood there with a bucket, and kept dipping it in, and then splashing it over them. After they were all well drenched, they would get up and walk forward, where another of the hands was stationed with a coarse cloth of canvas, who would rub them down after the manner of a groom rubbing down a horse.

He was also supplied with a bucket full of vinegar and salt-water.

This he made them rinse their mouths with and rub their teeth ; for if he does not keep his mouth clean a yellow substance collects on the gums and teeth of an African which turns to poison.

He is subject to uleers in his mouth from this ; and if he bites you—a thing not at all uncommon—the flesh will frequently mortify.

I know this to my cost ; for once hitting one of them with the back of my hand, I came in contact with his mouth, and one of his teeth touched and indented my hand, whereby I lost the use of it for some days.

These ablutionary measures employed us till between 8 and 9 a.m., when we used to serve out to them some dry biscuit and rum and water. The rum was a very coarse kind, like Bay rum ; none of us could drink it, but the slaves received it with great gusto.

This would satisfy their cravings till 11 o'clock, when they used to have a hot breakfast, consisting of a kind of hodge-podge.

The ingredients were biscuits broken up small, beans, rice, barley, and salt pork—the whole thickened with flour and fat. This was boiled in two large cauldrons in the caboose, and when ready, was emptied into tubs and buckets ranged along the deck.

We always tried to keep each tribe by itself ; for at meal-time, if they messed together, it was sure to end in a fight. So their meal, if not choice, was substantial and good, and plenty of it.

Of course we took every care of them, as it was our interest to do so. But in a crowded slave-ship disease is very rife ; we lost only ninety-four, which we considered lucky. Closeness of the bowels and jaundice are the most frequent maladies. The first we treated with vinegar, and gunpowder taken internally.

Whether this is one of the treatments ashore I cannot say, but we found it very successful on board.

After their breakfasts they were sent down to clean out the ship. Most of them spoke only the Congo dialect, but some of them understood Portuguese and Spanish. These we picked out as leaders and interpreters of the rest, and supplied them with a shirt or pair of trousers as a distinguishing mark of rank, which was greatly envied by the others.

They were also entrusted with a piece of rope, about a yard long, as an instrument of correction, which they very freely used.

We had only to tell these men what we wanted done, and they made the others do it. We also got up various amusements for the slaves, by making drums for them and a kind of cymbal, to the tune of which they danced.

At 3 p.m. another hot meal was served to them of the same composition as the first, and another at 8 p.m.; after which they were all packed below.

No lights were allowed at night in case of attracting attention. Even the compass or binnacle lights were well screened with canvas.

After passing the Isle of Pines, and having been thirty-one days from Cougo, we sighted Boca Grande, on the coast of Cuba. About the coast of Cuba are to be noticed a quantity of small fishing-boats and pilot-boats; these are nearly all in the pay of slave-owners ashore, who pay them to look out for the men-of-war, and also to mislead them, and report accordingly to any slave-ship about the coast that is waiting for a chance to land her cargo.

They take it in turn to look out. Their watch lasts for about ten days, when they are relieved by another boat, and receive a daulalaon each man.

One of these boats we found on the look-out for us. They informed us that the *Basilisk* English man-of-war was about, and therefore we could not land. Our orders from the shore were, that we were to stretch out to sea for four days, which we did, and then returned; when again we had orders to go out again to sea.

We obeyed accordingly, but nearly fell into a trap. We were standing on for a bluff in the Bahama Channel; when nearing it I thought I recognised it, for I had been frequently on the coast before, surveying in a man-of-war, and this I remembered as being our look-out.

I reported this to the captain, Don Pedro, as we called him.

He immediately changed the course ; it was lucky he did so, for we afterwards found that H.M.S. *Cumberland* was anchored on the other side of the bluff. Here, then, was another escape. After having been out the appointed time we again returned, when we received the same orders ; but our late narrow shave had rather tamed us, so we went aft to the captain, and told him that, after we had escaped so many dangers, it was a pity to run any more.

So I, being a good pilot among the many cays that abounds promised to take her in safety to one where we could land the slaves ; for a man-of-war can do nothing to you if you have no slaves on board ; so if they were even to be within ten yards of you on the rock, all that the man-of-war could do would be to liberate them.

We accordingly chose Indian Cay for our dépôt, and anchored in two fathoms' water. We afterwards discovered that the boat which had been guiding us and bringing our orders out, fell in with H.M.S. *Basilisk*, commanded by Captain Fare. He shipped on board as pilot, and promised Captain Fare to guide him to us—an engagement he performed by taking the *Basilisk* to the opposite direction.

After waiting for two days off the cay—for it takes them some time to get the boats ready, which are all secreted in the rocks—we at last saw five boats approaching, which we rightly guessed were for us. They brought clothes, etc., for the slaves, and money for the seamen ; for before one of the slaves left the ship we were all paid off.

From the day we left New York till the landing of the slaves on the quay, only five months and fourteen days had elapsed. Each man received 1,000 dol. for his services, and I received 100 dol. extra for my services as interpreter.

The slaves were then disembarked in the boats and shoved off.

We landed 710 slaves alive. It was then nearly dusk. The pilot-boat remained alongside for the night ; and early the next morning we laid seventeen fires in the ship's hold, and set fire to her, and burned her to the water's edge.

We all felt sorry to do it, for she was a pretty craft as ever floated. Till then we never knew the ship's name, for the one we left New York with, was a false one. But the captain, sympathising with us, said,—

“ There she burns, lads, the craft in which we have made our money—the beautiful *Flying Rosario* ! ”

When she was entirely burned we went on board the pilot-boat, and were landed at the Boca Grande. This I found was a wharf, ostensibly for the purpose of loading ships with sugar, and I believe a ship occasionally came there as a blind ; but it was used really for landing slaves.

We were afterwards conveyed by land to Havana, which we reached in nine days. It was only a little less than 200 miles but we had frequently to hide ourselves to escape detection, for our dangers were not over.

The inhabitants we met, knowing who we were would not even give us a glass of water under half-a-dollar. But in Havana the slave-trade is so well managed that it is rarely detected.

The other day, while perusing the papers from home, I read in the *Times* of the capture of the *Orion* slave-ship by H.M.S. *Pluto*. I must confess, reader, it was with a feeling of sorrow I could not repress, that I found the captain who commanded the *Orion* was the same I had sailed with in the *Flying Rosario*.

You may blame me for this, reader, but old companionship, old fellowship, and old times have their ties in whatever society we move in.

P.S.—Our passage from New York to Congo was 71 days. The reader may be astonished at the length of the voyage ; but we went along the land, beating against the southeast trade, and quite a different way to other ships, particularly men-of-war. We did not dare to return the same way, as we should pass the *Marion*, *Triton*, and others of our friends. I came home by H.M.S. *Basilisk*, the very ship that chased us in the *Flying Rosario*.

THE END.

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